

2000

Essential
Phrasal
Verbs

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Introduction

Phrasal verbs are very common in everyday, spoken English and in informal situations.

They're made from a verb, followed by a particle. For example: work out, log on, go away, fill up...

But the problem with phrasal verbs is that sometimes they are illogical (which makes them difficult to learn) – and there are lots of them!

In this PDF, get the most common 200 phrasal verbs in English. When you know these, you'll be able to take part in conversations and sound more natural.

The phrasal verbs are listed in topic areas to make them easier to learn and remember. For each phrasal verb I show you how to use them, and there's also an example sentence.

Important: How we use phrasal verbs

There are 4 types of phrasal verbs. You need to know the type of phrasal verb in order to use it correctly.

1. Phrasal verb with no object

These phrasal verbs stand on their own. You don't need anything after them.
Examples: “Go away!”, “Get out!”

2. Phrasal verb with object, which can be separated

With these phrasal verbs you have an object, which can go either before the particle, or after it.

Examples: work something out / work out something; turn something up / turn up something

But, if the object is a pronoun, it must go before the particle:

“Turn up the volume” - OK; “Turn the volume up” - OK; “Turn it up” - OK
(But NOT “Turn up it”)

3. Phrasal verb with object, which can't be separated

With this type, the object has to go after the complete phrasal verb.
Examples: go into (a room), break into (a house), take after somebody

4. Three-part phrasal verbs

With these phrasal verbs, you can't separate any of the particles with an object.
Examples: put up with, look up to, look down on

And now: Read on for the 200 Essential Phrasal verbs!

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Talking about Yourself and Family Life

bring up somebody / bring somebody up = look after children until they become adults

“She's bringing up four children on a teacher's salary.”
“We were brought up to be polite.”

come from somewhere / something = be from a place or a thing

“Where do you come from?”
“I think this sofa came from a friend's house.”

grow up = become older / more mature

“She grew up in London.”

live with someone / live together = live in the same house as your partner (but not be married)

“She's living with her boyfriend.”
“They live together.”

move in = start living in a new house

“We bought a new flat and we move in next week!”

move out = leave the place you're living in

“When they split up he agreed to move out.”

take after somebody = be similar to someone in your family

“I take after my mother. I have the same eyes.”

turn into (a type of person) = become a different type of person

“In the story, she kisses a frog, and the frog turns into a prince!”

Health

keep somebody in = make someone stay in hospital / their house

“Her operation went well, but they're going to keep her in for a few days.”

knock somebody down = hit someone with your car, etc and injure / kill them

“She was knocked down by a speeding car.”

put on something / put something on = add extra weight

“I've put on 3 kilos in a month!”

work out = do exercises

“She works out at the new gym twice a week.”

pass away = die (also "pass on")

"His father passed away last year."

Relationships

look after somebody or something = take care of somebody something

“Could you look after my cats when I'm on holiday?”

get on = have a good relationship

“They get on well.”

Romantic relationships

go out (with) = date somebody

“How long have they been going out?”

“Is he still going out with Jane?”

break up = end a relationship

“They broke up after a year.”

split up = end a relationship

“I've heard that Dave and Sue have split up.”

Everyday Activities and Routines

Going to bed / waking up

get up = get out of bed

“What time do you get up at the weekend?”

(Also “get someone up” = wake someone up: “She gets the children up and makes them breakfast.”)

lie down = go to bed / lie on the bed

“I’ve got a headache. I think I’m going to lie down for a while.”

wake up = stop being asleep

“When I woke up, it was still dark.”

(Also “wake someone up / wake up someone”: “A noise woke me up.”)

Clothes

have (got) on something / have (got) something on = wear clothes / shoes

“You can tell who the waiters are. They’ve all got black jackets on.”

put on something / put something on = wear something (clothes/makeup, etc)

“She put on her coat and left the house.”

“I’m going to put a bit of make up on tonight.”

take off something / take something off = remove clothing

“She was hot, so she took off her coat.”

Tidying

hang up something / hang something up = put something on clothes hangers

“She hung up her coat.”

put away something / put something away = store

“Let’s put these decorations away until next year.”

put back something / put something back = return something to its place

“She picked up a book, then put it back on the shelf.”

throw away/out something / throw something away/out = put in the rubbish bin

“He threw away some old clothes.”

clear up = tidy or clean

"Can you clear up after dinner, please?"

pick up somebody or something / pick somebody or something up = lift

“I picked up all the clothes which were on the floor.”

tidy up (something) / tidy (something) up = make everything tidy

“I’ll need to tidy up before my parents come round.”

“Are you going to tidy up your room?”

wash up (something) / wash (something) up = clean using water

“I’ll wash up if you cook dinner.”

“The saucepan’s dirty. You’ll need to wash it up before you can use it.”

Food

eat out = eat in restaurants

“How often do you eat out?”

take away (something) / take (something) away = food that you buy and take home (or to another place) to eat

“Two fishcakes to take away, please.”

Phrasals with stay

stay in = stay at home rather than go out

“I tend to stay in during the week.”

(see also “go out” in the “Movement & Travel” section)

stay out = not come home until late at night (or not come home at all)

"I can't stay out late tonight. I've got to get up early tomorrow."

stay over = spend the night somewhere else

"You can stay over if you don't want to drive back tonight."

stay up = go to bed late

"She stayed up until 3 am waiting for her son to come home."

Time and Schedule

Schedule

break up = when school finishes

“When do the schools break up for Christmas?”

Hurry

come on = hurry

“Come on! We're going to be late!”

hurry up = do something quickly

“You'll need to hurry up or you'll miss the plane.”

Wait

hang on = wait

“Can you hang on for a moment while I get a pen?”

hold on = wait

“Can you hold on for a moment while I get a pen?”

Delay

hold up (somebody) / hold (somebody) up = create a delay

“Please go before me. I don't want to hold you up!”

“What's holding up the queue?”

put off something / put something off = delay doing something

“She put off going to the dentist for as long as she could.”

Spending time

hang about/around (somewhere) = spend time somewhere, but without doing anything

“He hangs around with his friends on the streets every day after school.”

Movement and Travel

Movement

get up = stand up

"He's very polite and always gets up when someone comes into the room."

fall down = to fall to the ground

"A couple of trees fell down in the storm."

fall over = lose your balance and fall

"I fell over a toy that he left on the carpet."

put up something / put something up = raise

"If you know the answer you can put up your hand."

put up something / put something up = erect a sign

"Let's put a sign up so people know where to park their cars during the party."

put down something / put something down = put something on the floor

"I put my book down for a minute, and someone took it."

Approaching / Going away

catch up somebody / or catch somebody up = manage to reach someone

"He's just left for the bus. You'll have to run to catch him up."

come up = approach somebody

"He came up to me and asked me for directions."

get away = escape

"The police chased the men, but they got away."

run away = leave your home / another place without telling anyone

"Nobody was surprised when he ran away from home."

Going into or leaving a place

break in or break into something = go into a building using force in order to steal something

"Thieves broke in and stole some computers."

"He broke into the house when they were on holiday."

come in = enter a room

“I knocked on the door and someone said “Come in!””

go in = enter a place

“I went in to the kitchen and started making dinner.”

get in = be able to enter a place

“I couldn’t get in because I didn’t have my keys.”

get in = arrive at a place

“His flight got in late, so he stayed at the airport hotel.”

show up = arrive at a place, appear

“He finally showed up two hours late.”

get out = leave a place or a car

“I need to get out and go for a walk. See you later!”

“I’ll get out at that bus stop. Thanks for the lift!”

go out = leave your house

“I often go out at the weekend.”

go away = leave, go to a different place

“Please go away and leave me alone for a few minutes! I need to think.”

go off = leave a place

“He went off to find his friends.”

come back = return

“He came back home exhausted after a long trip.”

get back = return to a place (often after a journey)

“What time did you get back last night?”

go back = return to a place (often home)

“After the concert, we went back home in a taxi.”

Transport

get on (something) = go onto a bus, train or plane

“The quickest way to the station is to get on the 137 bus.”

get off (something) = leave a bus, train or plane

“You’ll need to get off the bus just after the bridge.”

run over somebody or something / run somebody or something over = hit someone / something when you are driving

“He felt terrible when he ran over a cat.”

take off = when a plane goes into the sky

“What time does the plane take off?”

Holidays / Visiting

get away = go on holiday because you need it

“I hope we’ll be able to get away this summer.”

go away = to travel

“They’re going away to Rome for a few days.”

look around/round somewhere = visit a place

“We had a couple of hours to look around the shops when we went to Stratford.”

Travelling

book somebody in / book somebody into something = organise to stay in a hotel

“Can you book me into a hotel near the conference centre?”

check in = tell someone (in a hotel / airport) that you have arrived

“What time do we need to check in for the flight?”

check out = leave a hotel

“What time do we need to check out?”

pick up somebody / pick somebody up = collect someone

“Can you pick me up at the station? My train gets in at 8.15.”

see off somebody / see somebody off = go to the station / airport with a person to say goodbye

"Are you going to see me off tomorrow?"

set off = leave on a journey

"We'll need to set off early tomorrow to beat the traffic."

set out = start a long journey

"He set out for the mountains."

Money and Shopping

Money

add up something / add something up = add figures together

“He added up all the money he earned.”

pay back somebody / pay somebody back = pay someone money you owe them

“Can I borrow some money? I’ll pay you back tomorrow.”

pay off something / pay something off = pay all the money that you owe

“When you get a job you’ll have to pay off your student loan.”

take out something / take something out = withdraw money from your bank account

“I need to take some money out before our holiday.”

come down = become less or lower

“The price of smartphones has come down.”

“You should wait until the prices come down in the sales before you buy a new TV.”

go down = become less

“When prices go down, more people will spend their money.”

go up = increase

“House prices are going up again.”

put up something / put something up = increase the price

“The supermarkets keep putting the price of coffee up.”

bring back something / bring something back = return an item to a shop

“Can I bring this back if it doesn’t fit?”

take back something / take something back = return an item to a shop

“You should take that jumper back if it’s got a hole in it.”

(Also “get back” and “send back” in the section on “Giving & Returning things”)

Clothes

try on something / try something = wear something before you buy it so you know if it fits you

"Where can I try on these jeans?"

Supplies

run out / run out of something = use all your supplies

"We've run out of bread. Could you get some when you go shopping?"

sell out / sell out of something = sell all you have of something

"The shop sold out of the new iPhone."

Giving and Returning things

Giving

give away something / give something away = donate to another person / organisation

"She gave away all her money to charity."

pass on something / pass something on = give something to another person

"When you finish with the magazine, please pass it on to Tracy."

Returning things

give back something / give something back = return something you took

"I'll give you your phone back at the end of the lesson."

bring back something / bring something back = return with something

"She brought back some souvenirs from holiday."

get back something / get something back = have something returned to you

"I want to get my money back!"

"I lent my car to him last week and I still haven't got it back!"

send something back / send back something = return something (because it isn't right in some way)

"I always buy things online, because it's easy to send them back if I don't like them."

take back something / take something back = take something to its original place

"Can you take this book back to the library for me?"

Socialising and Activities With Other People

catch up with somebody = meet a friend and chat

“I haven't seen you in ages. There's lots we need to catch up with!”

get together = spend time with friends

“We often get together for a drink in the pub.”

hang out = spend time with a group of friends

“He hangs out with a group of kids from school.”

join in (something) = get involved with what other people are doing

“She always watches the other children playing, but she never joins in.”

“At Christmas, everyone joins in with the food preparations.”

Going somewhere together

call for somebody = collect someone from a place (often their house), then go together to a place

“I'll call for you tomorrow at 7.30, if that's OK for you.”

come along = accompany someone

“We're going to London tomorrow. Why don't you come along with us?”

take out somebody / take somebody out = take someone to a place as a treat / outing

“She took her children out to the beach for a day.”

Visit someone / a place

come round = go to someone's house

“Do you want to come round tonight? I can cook dinner.”

show somebody around / round = show a place to someone

“Let me show you round the house.”

take somebody around/round (somewhere) = to show someone a place

“When they came to London, I took them around and showed them the sights.”

Communicating and Reacting to Other People

Phoning

call back (somebody) / call (somebody) back = return someone's call
"Can you call me back after 6pm?"

(also ring back / phone back)

"Please phone back later." "I'm ringing you back about the meeting."

pass on something / pass something on = give information or a message

"Can you pass on a message to Julie for me?"

put down something / put something down = replace the phone receiver

"He finished speaking and then put the phone down."

(Also "put the phone down on somebody") "Wow! He put the phone down on me!"

hang up = finish a phone conversation or stop the call

"The number was engaged, so she hung up."

(Also "hang up on someone") "He hung up on me without saying goodbye!"

put somebody through = connect someone on the phone

"Could you put me through to Mr Davis, please?"

speak up = speak more loudly

"Can you speak up please? The line's bad."

Speaking

go on = continue

"Don't stop - please go on with your story!"

read out something / read something out = read something aloud

"Can you read out the next sentence, please?"

point out something / point something out = explain something

"He wanted to get the fast train, but I pointed out that it cost twice as much."

make up something / make something up = invent a story that isn't true

"She made up an excuse about not doing her homework."

give in = to finally agree to what someone else wants

“The kids kept asking for a dog, and we finally gave in.”

Look out! = what you say in a dangerous situation

“Look out! There's a car coming!”

watch out = be careful

"Watch out! There's an extra step here!"

Writing

fill in /out something / fill something in / out = complete a form

“To get a loyalty card, you'll need to fill out this form.”

sign up = write your name to register for an activity

“Have you signed up for yoga classes yet?”

stand for = when letters represent words

"What does BBC stand for?" "I think it's British Broadcasting Corporation."

write back = write in reply to someone's letter

“He wrote back to the company.”

write down something / write something down = write something important

“Can you write this down in your books?”

Make Public

come out = be available

“When does their new CD come out?”

give out something / give something out = distribute

“They gave out bottles of water to people on the marathon.”

hand out something / hand something out = distribute

“She handed out flyers to all the students.”

pass around/round something or pass something around/round = distribute something

"She opened a packet of biscuits and then passed them round."

Feelings and Emotions

calm down (somebody) / calm (somebody) down = feel less angry or upset

"You need to calm down and tell me what happened!"

"The students were worried about the exam, and it took me ages to calm them down."

cheer up (somebody) / cheer (somebody) up = make someone feel happier

"Cheer up! It's your birthday!"

"I think I'm going to get her some flowers to cheer her up."

chill out = relax and not feel stressed

"Chill out! It doesn't matter if we're late for the meeting!"

get somebody down = make someone feel unhappy

"Work is really getting me down at the moment."

Thinking and Deciding

Get information

find out (something) / find (something) out = find the information you need

"Can you find out what time the film starts?"

"I don't know what he wants. I'll try to find out."

look up something / look something up = find information in a book / online

"If you don't know the meaning of a word, look it up in a dictionary."

figure out something or somebody / figure something / somebody out = work out, understand

"I can't figure out why he wants to leave university."

work out something / work something out = find a solution (also in maths)

"I can't work out the percentage."

"It took then an hour to work out the best way to solve the problem."

sort out something / sort something out = solve a problem or deal with something difficult

"I need to sort out a couple of things before I can leave tonight."

Deciding

go for something = choose

“Which car do you think you'll go for?”

Using your mind

mix up somebody or something / mix somebody or something up =
confuse two things / people

"I often mix up Italian and French when I speak."

“It's easy to mix the twins up – they're identical!”

read over/through something or read something over/through = read
something carefully

"Did you read through your CV before you posted it?"

Working, Doing things , Starting and Finishing Things

Do / continue

carry on (something) = continue

"When everyone left the office, he carried on working."

"Don't let me disturb you. Please carry on."

carry out something / carry something out = do something that you have planned

"We'll need more team members to carry out this new project."

get on = make progress, deal with a situation

"How are you getting on with that project?"

go ahead = continue as planned

"Their holiday plans are going ahead, even if they don't have much money."

go ahead = allow someone do something

"Can I take this chair?"

"Sure, go ahead!"

go on = happen

"What's going on here? Why is there so much noise in the classroom?"

keep up something / keep something up = continue to maintain a particular (high) level

"To lose weight you'll need to keep up all your new exercise habits."

Work -related

give in something / give something in = give someone a piece of work for them to evaluate

"You'll need to give your final project in next week."

hand in something / hand something in = give someone a piece of work for them to evaluate

"I need to hand in my essay tomorrow."

go through = examine carefully

"The security people at the airport will probably go through your bag."

(see also "read through" in the "Thinking & Deciding" section)

Starting

start off something / start something off = begin something

"She started off her speech by thanking the president."

set up something / set something up = establish

"He set up a trust fund for his children."

"They set up a small business."

take up something / take something up = start a new hobby / job

"He's taken up gardening."

Do until it's finished

cut up something / cut something up = cut the whole of something into smaller pieces

"He cut up all his credit cards."

end up = finally be in a place or situation

"He ended up in a great job."

fill up something / fill something up = make something full

"Can you fill the car up with petrol, please?"

(See also "clear up", "tidy up", "wash up" in the "Everyday Activities" section)

Stopping, Preventing and Excluding

Stopping

close down (something) / close (something) down = stop operating

"There were four pubs in this village, but three have closed down now."

shut down (something) / shut (something) down = stop operating

"When the factories shut down, thousands of people lost their jobs."

give up (something) / give (something) up = stop an activity or job

"When did you give up smoking?"

give up = stop doing something because it's too difficult

"I couldn't find the answer online - I just gave up in the end."

Exclude

keep (somebody / something) out = exclude someone / something

“The sign said ‘Keep Out!’ so we knew we were on private property.”

leave behind somebody / something or leave somebody / something behind = leave a place, but not take someone / something with you

“When they moved, they left behind all the carpets.”

leave out somebody / something or leave somebody / something out = not include someone or something

"This question is too difficult. I think I'll leave it out of the test."

"He didn't invite her to his party and she felt left out."

stay behind = not leave with other people, but stay in a place

“Can you stay behind after class to talk to me?” the teacher asked.

take away something / take something away = subtract a number

"What number do you get if you take three away from six?"

take away something / take something away = remove to another place

"Someone came to take our old car away."

take out something / take something out = remove from a room

“We'll have to take out these chairs before the party.”

Prevent

keep (somebody / something) off something = stop someone from walking in a particular place

“Keep off the grass!”

Machines and Objects

Stop working

break down = stop working

“My car has broken down again.”

go off = stop working (because of a lack of power)

“We were all scared when the lights suddenly went off.”

Starting / Stopping machines

log in/on = connect to a computer using your password

"You'll need to log in to use this service."

log off/out = stop your connection to a computer

"Don't forget to log off when you've finished using gmail."

put on something / put something on = make something start

“Can you put on the TV, please?”

“They put a CD on.”

switch off something / switch something off = make a machine stop working

“Can you switch the TV off, please?”

switch on something / switch something on = make a machine start

“Can you switch on the TV, please?”

turn off something / turn something off = make a machine stop working

“Can you turn the TV off, please?”

turn on something / turn something on = make a machine start working

“Can you turn on the TV, please?”

turn down something / turn something down = reduce the heat / volume

“Can you turn the noise down, please?”

“When the vegetables begin to boil, you can turn them down.”

turn up something / turn something up = increase the volume / heat

“Can you turn up the sound, please?”

Using things

back up something / back something up = copy something from your computer so you have a second copy if your computer crashes

"Don't forget to back up your work."

turn (somebody/something) into somebody / something = transform somebody / something into a different person / thing

"I want to turn this material into trousers."

wear out (something) / wear (something) out = use something so much it becomes old or damaged (clothes, objects and people!)

"I think this old sweater is beginning to wear out."

"I've worn out my new shoes already!"

Increase and Decrease

cool down/off (somebody or something) / (cool somebody or something) down/off = become less hot

"The holiday villa was great. When it got too hot, we just jumped into the swimming pool to cool off."

"You should cool down the meat before serving."

cut down = reduce the quantity

"I'm cutting down the amount of meat I eat."

(also "cut down on" = "I'm cutting down on the amount of meat I eat.")

slow down (somebody / something) / slow (somebody / something) down = become slower

"Can you slow down a bit? I don't understand what you're saying!"

(also come down / go up / go down / put up = in "Money and shopping" section; turn up / turn down = "Machines & Objects" section)

Weather and Natural Conditions

blow away (something) / blow (something) away = when the wind moves something

“Don't leave your money on the table. The wind will blow it away.”
“My money blew away in the wind.”

blow down (something) / blow (something) down = fall down because of the wind

“Three massive oak trees blew down in the storm.”
“The wind blew all the trees down.”

clear up = when the weather becomes brighter or drier

"The day will start cloudy, but it will clear up later."

come out = when the sun appears

“When the sun came out it felt quite warm in the garden.”

come up = rise (sun / moon)

"What time does the sun come up?"

go down = when the sun disappears

“It can get really cold when the sun goes down.”

Fire and Explosions

blow up (something / somebody) / blow (somebody / something) up = explode with a bomb

“The terrorists threatened to blow the plane up.”
“If you see something suspicious, don't touch it. If it's a bomb it might blow up.”

blow out (something) / blow (something) out = stop burning

“She blew out the candle on her birthday cake.”

go out = when a light or fire stops burning

“I think the fire has gone out. Could you light it again for me?”

put out something / put something out = stop something burning

“It took 50 firefighters to put out the fire.”