

Phrasal Verbs

I. Introduction

Phrasal verbs are extremely common in modern English. A phrasal verb is a verb followed by a particle, where a particle can be a preposition, an adverb or a combination of the two. The 'verb + particle' combination normally alters the usual meaning of the verb. Thus, by adding different adverbs or prepositions to the same verb, a variety of meanings are obtained. For example,

Give up = abandon

Give in = yield

Run out of = have no more of something

Run across = meet/find (someone/something) by chance

II. Transitive/Intransitive Phrasal Verbs

Like all one-word verbs, phrasal verbs are either transitive (tr.) or intransitive (intr.). A transitive phrasal verb requires an object whereas intransitive phrasal verbs do not take objects. For example,

Look out is intransitive as in 'Look out, the bus is coming.'

Look after is transitive as in 'I need someone to look after my baby.'

Some phrasal verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively:

Blow up (tr.) = cause to explode: the enemies blew up the bridge

Blow up (intr.) = explode: the plane blew up in the air

It is also possible for a phrasal verb to have two or more meanings, and to be transitive in one/some of these and intransitive in others:

Take off (tr.) = remove as in 'Take off your shoes before entering my room.'

Take off (intr.) = rise from the ground as in 'The plane will take off in a minute.'

III. Separable Vs non-separable phrasal verbs

Usually, intransitive phrasal verbs are non-separable, i.e. the verb must be immediately followed by the particle and no adverbs whatsoever are allowed in-between:

The plane took quickly off. X

The balloon blew quickly up. X

Both of these sentences are WRONG.

However, not all the transitive phrasal verbs are separable.

Separable:

John took off his shoes before entering the house.

John took his shoes off before entering the house.

Non-separable:

The police are looking into this case.

The police are looking this case into. X

Mary is looking for a baby-sitter.

Mary is looking a baby-sitter for. X

Note:

For separable phrasal verbs, the use of a pronoun as the object of the verb must come between the verb and the particle:

Seeing that his shoes were dirty, John took them off (NOT 'took off them') before entering the house.

However, for non-separable phrasal verbs, even a pronoun as the object can never come between the verb and the particle.

Where is Mary? Everybody is looking for her. (NOT 'Everybody is looking her for)

The following is a list of common English phrasal verbs in alphabetical order. Their attributes, i.e. transitive (tr.), intransitive (intr.) separable or non-separable are given in the brackets:

Account for (tr. non-separable) = give a reason for

Allow for (tr. non-separable) = make provision in advance for

Answer (someone) back (tr. separable, object before 'back'; intr.) = reply rudely (to)

Answer for (tr. non-separable) = be held responsible for

Ask after (tr. non-separable) = ask for news of (someone)

Ask for (tr. non-separable) = request, demand

Back out (intr.) = withdraw

Back up (tr. separable) = support

Blow out (tr. separable) = extinguish (a flame) by blowing

Blow up (intr.) = explode with anger; become very angry

Blow up (tr. separable) = cause to explode, inflate

Break down (tr. separable) = separate into different kinds or parts (e.g. figures); destroy

Break down (intr.) = collapse; stop working (machinery)

Break in (intr.) = enter a house by force and commit a burglary therein

Break into (tr. non-separable) = enter a house by force and commit a burglary therein

Break into (tr. non-separable) = begin suddenly (laughter, tears, etc.)

Break off (tr. separable; intr.) = detach or become detached

Break off (tr. separable) = terminate (agreements, relationship, etc.)

Break out (intr.) = begin suddenly and often violently (of undesirable events or conditions)

Break up (tr. separable; intr.) = disintegrate, cause to disintegrate

Break up (intr.) = terminate (relationship, school terms, meetings etc.)

Break with (tr. non-separable) = end a friendship or connection with (friends, old ideas etc.)

Bring about (tr. separable) = cause to happen

Bring forward (tr. separable) = introduce for consideration or discussion; move to an earlier date

Bring (somebody) round (tr. object before 'round') = restore to consciousness

Bring up (tr. separable) = rear children from birth

Bring up (tr. separable) = mention (a question)

Burn down (tr. separable; intr.) = destroy, be destroyed completely by fire

Call at a place (tr. non-separable) = visit a place, usually for a short time

Call off (tr. separable) = cancel a scheduled activity

Call on someone (tr. non-separable) = pay a short visit to (someone)

Call for (tr. non-separable) = require, demand

Call up (tr. separable) = telephone

Care about Something / someone (tr. non-separable) = think something/someone is important

Care for (tr. non-separable) = like

Carry on (intr.) = continue

Carry on with (tr. non-separable) = continue

Carry out (tr. separable) = perform, execute

Catch up (with) (tr. separable; intr.) = come up from behind and reach the same level as

Come across (tr. non-separable) = meet/find by chance

Come by (tr. non-separable) = obtain, become possessed of

Come into (tr. non-separable) = receive or inherit (a sum of money)

Come of (tr. non-separable) = be descended from
Come round/to (intr.) = regain consciousness
Come to oneself (non-separable) = regain consciousness
Come up (intr.) = happen unexpectedly

Count on (tr. non-separable) = rely on, trust

Cross out (tr. separable) = delete a word/words by drawing a line or a cross on it

Cut down (tr. separable) = fell (trees)
Cut down on (tr. separable; intr.) = reduce the size or amount
Cut in (intr.) = interrupt someone who is talking
Cut in (intr.) = drive into a space between cars in a dangerous way
Cut off (tr. separable) = disconnect

Die away (intr.) = gradually become less and less and finally stop (of sound, light etc.)
Die down (intr.) = become less strong or violent
Die out (intr.) = become extinct

Do in (tr. object before 'in') = kill

Draw up (tr. separable) = make a written plan
Draw up (intr.) = stop (of a vehicle)

Drop in (intr.) = pay a short unannounced visit
Drop out (intr.) = withdraw

Fall for (tr. non-separable) = be attracted by; be deceived by
Fall on (tr. non-separable) = attack
Fall out (intr.) = argue
Fall through (intr.) = fail to happen (of a plan, intended event etc)

Fill in/up/out (tr. separable) = complete (a form)

Fix up (tr. separable) = arrange

Get along/on (intr.) = to continue or manage in spite of difficulties
Get along/on (intr.) = advance or develop
Get along/on with (tr. non-separable; intr.) = have a friendly relationship with
Get away (intr.) = escape
Get off (tr. non-separable; intr.) = alight from a vehicle
Get on (tr. non-separable; intr.) = board a vehicle
Get on (intr.), get on with (tr. non-separable) = advance or develop
Get over (tr. non-separable) = recover from (illness)

Get through (tr. non-separable; intr.) = finish successfully, pass (an exam)

Get somebody through something (tr. separable) = cause to pass through

Give (something) away (tr. separable) = give it to someone

Give back (tr. separable) = return (something) to its owner

Give in (intr.) = yield, cease to resist; accept someone else's views

Give off (tr. non-separable) = produce, release something (sound, smell etc.) into the air

Give up (tr. separable; intr.) = abandon

Give oneself up (tr. object before 'up') = surrender

Go down (intr.) = decrease

Go on (intr.) = happen

Go on (intr.) = continue

Go off (intr.) = explode (of a bomb); ring or sound loudly (of an alarm); stop operating; become rotten (of food)

Go out with (tr. non-separable) = to have a date with

Go with (tr. non-separable) = match

Go over/through (tr. non-separable) = examine, check

Go through (tr. non-separable) = suffer, endure

Go up (intr.) = rise

Hand in (tr. separable) = give in by hand; submit (written work)

Hand out (tr. separable) = distribute

Hand over (tr. separable; intr.) = surrender authority or responsibility to another

Hang about/around (tr. non-separable; intr.) = loiter

Hang on (intr.) = wait for a short while

Hang out (intr.) = spend a lot of time in a particular place

Hang out (tr. separable) = hang on a clothes line to dry (of washed clothes)

Hang over (tr. non-separable) = worry or bother (of an unpleasant event)

Hang up (intr.) = end a telephone call by replacing the receiver

Hold on (intr.) = wait for a short while (on the telephone)

Hold up (tr. separable) = delay

Hold up (tr. separable) = rob by using threat of violence

Keep off (tr. separable) = stay away from

Keep off (intr.) = not happen

Keep on (tr. followed by a gerund, non-separable) = continue

Keep up (tr. separable; intr.) = maintain (an effort)

Keep up with (tr. non-separable) = remain abreast of someone/something

Knock down/over (tr. separable) = hit (usually with vehicles)

Knock off (tr. non-separable; intr.) = stop work for the day

Knock out (tr. separable) = hit someone so hard that s/he become unconscious

Lay off (tr. separable) = dismiss

Leave out (tr. separable) = omit

Let someone down (tr. object before 'down') = disappoint

Let in (tr. separable) = allow to enter

Let out (tr. separable) = make wider (of clothes); release

Let out (tr. non-separable) = produce (a sound)

Live up to (tr. non-separable) = keep the high standards of

Look after (tr. non-separable) = take care of

Look back (intr.) = reflect on the past

Look back on (tr. non-separable) = reflect on the past

Look for (tr. non-separable) = seek

Look forward to (tr. non-separable) = expect with pleasure

Look into (tr. non-separable) = investigate

Look on (tr. non-separable) = consider

Look on (intr.) = be a spectator

Look out (intr.) = be watchful

Look out for (tr. non-separable) = pay attention to; take care to avoid

Look up (tr. separable) = find information

Look up (intr.) = improve

Look up to (tr. non-separable) = respect

Look down on (tr. non-separable) = despise

Make for (tr. non-separable) = move towards

Make off (intr.) = escape

Make out (tr. separable) = manage (with difficulty) to understand, see

Make up (tr. separable; intr.) = use cosmetics

Make up (one's mind) (tr. non-separable) = come to a decision

Make up (a quarrel) (tr. separable; intr.) = end a quarrel

Make up (a story) (tr. separable) = invent a story

Make up for (tr. non-separable) = compensate for

Pass away (intr.) = die

Pass out (intr.) = lose consciousness

Pass out (intr.) = finish a course esp. at a military school

Pass out (tr. separable) = distribute

Pick on (somebody) (tr. non-separable) = find fault with

Pick out (tr. separable) = choose carefully from among others

Pick up (tr. separable) = collect (something/someone)

Pick up (tr. separable) = acquire (a language)

Pick up (intr.) = improve, return to a former good state

Pull down (tr. separable) = demolish
Pull up (intr.) = stop (of a vehicle)
Pull over (intr) = drive to one side of the road and (usually) stop (of a vehicle)

Put aside/by (tr. separable) = save for future use
Put forward (tr. separable) = raise for consideration (of a suggestion)
Put off (tr. separable) = postpone
Put on (tr. separable) = dress oneself in
Put someone up (tr. object before 'up') = provide temporary accommodation
Put in a claim (tr. separable) = lodge a claim
Put in for a job (tr. non-separable) = apply for a job
Put on an electrical appliance (tr. separable) = turn on
Put out a fire (tr. separable) = extinguish a fire
Put up a tent (tr. separable) = erect
Put up with someone (tr. non-separable) = tolerate

Result from (tr. non-separable) = be caused by
Result in (tr. non-separable) = cause

Run into a vehicle (tr. non-separable) = collide with
Run into/across (tr. non-separable) = meet/find by chance
Run out of (tr. non-separable) = use up all the supplies of something
Run over (tr. non-separable) = drive over

See somebody off (tr. object before 'off') = to say goodbye (at the airport, the train station etc.) to departing traveller
See somebody out (tr. object before 'out') = accompany a departing guest to the door of the house
See to (tr. non-separable) = take care of (something which needs to be done)

Send for (tr. non-separable) = summon

Set in (intr.) = begin a period, usually unpleasant
Set off/out (intr.) = start a journey
Set up (tr. separable) = put up, erect, establish
Set up (intr.) = start a business

Show up (intr.) = be present, attend
Show off (tr. separable; intr.) = display (skill, possessions etc.) in order to win applause

Shut down (tr. separable; intr.) = cease operation
Shut up (intr.) = stop talking
Shut (somebody) up = stop somebody talking

Sit back (intr.) = relax

Stand by (tr. non-separable) = support

Stand for (tr. non-separable) = represent

Stand by (intr.) = be ready to provide help or take action when necessary

Stand out (intr.) = be very noticeable

Stay up (intr.) = remain out of bed until later than usual

Step up (tr. separable) = increase the speed of; intensify

Take after (tr. non-separable) = resemble

Take down (tr. separable) = put what is said into a written form

Take for (tr. non-separable) = mistake for

Take in (tr. separable) = deceive

Take in (tr. separable) = receive as lodgers

Take in (tr. separable) = absorb or understand

Take in (tr. separable) = make smaller (of clothes)

Take off (tr. separable) = remove

Take off (intr.) = rise from the ground

Take on (tr. separable) = engage (staff); stand up to, oppose

Take over (tr. separable; intr.) = take control of, in succession of someone else

Take to (tr. non-separable) = start to like (someone/something)

Take up (tr. separable) = start a hobby

Take up (tr. non-separable) = occupy (time, space etc)

Talk over (tr. separable) = discuss

Tell someone off (tr. object before 'off') = scold someone

Think over (tr. separable) = consider before making a decision

Turn away (tr. separable) = refuse admittance to

Turn down (tr. separable) = refuse

Turn down (tr. separable) = decrease the volume (of a radio, tv, etc)

Turn into (tr. non-separable) = convert, change into

Turn in (intr.) = go to bed

Turn off (tr. separable) = switch off

Turn on (tr. separable) = switch on

Turn out (tr. separable) = produce

Turn out (tr. separable) = evict

Turn over (tr. separable) = turn something to the other side

Turn over (intr.) = capsize

Turn up (intr.) = be present

Turn up (tr. separable) = increase the volume

Wait on (tr. non-separable) = serve

Watch out (intr.) = look out, be watchful

Watch out for (tr. non-separable) = be watchful for (usually in order to avoid something)

Wear out (tr. separable; intr.) = become old or damaged

Wear out (tr. separable) = exhaust

Wind down (tr. separable) = move downwards (of the window of a car)

Wind up (tr. separable) = move upwards (of the window of a car)

Wind up (tr. separable) = close completely (of a business)

Wind up (tr. separable) = turn the knob (of a watch, clock, etc.) in order to make it operate

Work out (tr. separable) = find (a solution to some problem)

Work out (tr. separable) = calculate

Work out (tr. separable) = plan or decide

Work out (intr.) = be successful

Separable

add up - add

back up - cause to move backwards; support; blow up; cause to explode; destroy by explosives

break down - analyze; list the parts of separately

break into - go into a house or room forcibly; suddenly; begin; bring

about - cause to happen

bring off - accomplish

bring on - cause

bring out - publish; emphasize

bring over - bring

bring to - revive

bring up - raise; care for from childhood

brush out - brush the inside of

burn down - destroy by burning

burn up - consume by fire

buy out - buy the other person's share of a business

buy up - buy the whole supply of

call off - cancel; order away

call up - telephone; summon for military service

calm down - become calm

carry on - continue

carry out - fulfill; complete; accomplish; perform

carry over - carry; continue at another time or place

cheer up - cause to become cheerful

chew up - chew thoroughly

chop up - chop into small pieces
clean off - clean the surface of
clean out - clean the inside of
clean up - clarify; tidy
clear out - clear the surface of
clear up - clear the inside of
close down - close permanently
close up - close temporarily
count in - include
count out - exclude
count up - calculate; count; add to a total
cross out - eliminate
cut off - interrupt; sever; amputate
cut out - eliminate; delete
cut down - reduce in quantity
draw up - write; compose (a document)
dress up - put clothes on; adorn
dust out - dust the inside of
eat up - eat completely
figure out - interpret; understand
figure up - compute
fill in - complete (a printed form)
fill out - complete (a printed form)
fill up - fill completely (a container)
find out - discover
fix up - repair; arrange in a suitable manner
get across - cause to be understood
give back - return
give out - distribute; announce
give up - surrender something
hand down - deliver; pronounce formally; leave as an inheritance
hand over - yield control of
hang up - suspend
have on - be dressed in
have over - entertain someone informally at one's home
hold off - delay; restrain
hold up - delay; rob; threaten with a weapon
keep up - continue; keep the same pace
leave out - omit
let down - disappoint
let out - release from confinement; make larger (in sewing)
light up - light; illuminate thoroughly
live down - live in such a way as to cause something to be forgotten
make over - remake
move over - move to the side
pass out - distribute
pass up - not take advantage of (as an opportunity)
pass on - transmit

pay back - repay
pay off - discharge a debt completely; give someone his final pay
pick up - come to meet an escort; lift with hands or fingers; learn casually; initiate an association publicly
play down - minimize
play up - emphasize
point out - indicate
pull down - pull in a downward direction; raze
push across - cause to be understood or accepted
put off - postpone
put on - dress in; deceive or fool
put up - preserve (food); receive as an overnight guest
quiet down - be quiet
ring up - the telephone
rinse off - rinse the surface of
rinse out - rinse the inside of
rule out - eliminate
run down - trace; disparage; hit with a vehicle
run off - cause to depart; reproduce mechanically
save up - accumulate
see through - complete; in spite of difficulties
see off - accompany someone to the beginning of a trip
send back - send to a place where formerly located
send over - send to where someone is
set up - arrange
show off - exhibit ostentatiously
shut off - cause to cease functioning
slow up - cause to move more slowly
spell out - enumerate; state in detail
stand up - fail to keep an appointment with
sweep out - sweep the inside of
take back - return; retract a statement
take down - remove from a high position; write from dictation
take in - understood; fool; deceive; make smaller (in sewing)
take over - take; assume command of
tear down - destroy
tear up - tear into small pieces
tell off - scold; reprimand
think over - consider
think through - consider from beginning to end
think up - create; invent
throw away - discard
throw over - reject
tie up - tie securely or tight
tire out - cause to be exhausted
touch up - repair
try on - put on a garment to verify the fit
try out - test

turn down - refuse; lower the volume
turn out - produce; force into exile, extinguish (a light)
wash off - wash the surface of
wash out - wash the inside of
wear out - use until no longer usable; tire greatly
wind up - finish, tighten the spring of a watch or machine
wipe off - wipe the surface of
wipe out - wipe the inside of; decimate
work out - solve
write down - record
write out - write down every detail; spell out
write up - compose; prepare (a document)

Inseparable

back out of - desert; fail to keep a promise
bear down on - lean on; browbeat
bear on - have to do with
bear up under - endure
break in on - interrupt
break into - interrupt
call for - come to get; require
care for - like; guard; supervise; maintain
carry on with - continue
catch up with - cover the distance between oneself and
check up on - examine; verify
come across - find accidentally
come along with - accompany; make progress
come by - find accidentally
come down with - become ill with
come out with - utter; produce
come up with - utter; produce
count on - rely on
cut in on - interrupt
disagree with - cause illness or discomfort to
do away with - abolish
do without - deprive oneself of
drop in at/on - visit casually without planning
drop out of - leave; quit
face up to - acknowledge
fall behind in - lag; not progress at required pace
fall back on - use for emergency purpose
fall out with - quarrel with
fill in for - substitute for
get ahead of - surpass; beat
get around - evade; avoid
get away with - do without being caught or punished
get by with - manage with a minimum of effort

get down to - become serious about; consider
get in - enter (a vehicle)
get off - descend from; leave
get on - enter (a vehicle); mount
get on with - proceed with
get through with - terminate, finish
go back on - desert; fail to keep (a promise)
go for - like a great deal
go in for - be interested in; participate in
go on with - continue
go over - review
go with - harmonize with; look pleasing together
go without - abstain from
hang around - remain idly in the vicinity of
hear from - receive a communication from
hear of - learn about (sometimes accidentally)
hit on - discover accidentally
hold on to - grasp tightly
hold out against - resist
keep at - persevere at
keep to - persist in; continue
keep up with - maintain the pace of
lie down on - evade; fail to do
live on - support or sustain oneself by means of
live up to - maintain the standard demanded of
look after - take care of
look back on - remember nostalgically
look down on - feel superior to
look forward to - anticipate
look up to - respect; admire
make up for - compensate for
pass on - transmit
pick on - tease; bully
play up to - flatter for personal advantage
put up with - tolerate
read up on - search out information on
run against - compete against in an election
run away with - leave; escape from
run for - campaign for
see about - consider; arrange
see to - arrange; supervise
settle on - decide on; choose
stand for - represent; permit
stand up for - support; demand
stand up to - resist
stick to - persist
stick up for - support; defend
take after - resemble

talk back to - answer impolitely
talk over - discuss
tell on - report misbehavior to authority
touch on - mention briefly
turn into - become
wait on - serve
wait up for - not go to bed while waiting for
watch out for - be careful for

Intransitive

back down - retreat from a position in an argument
back out - desert; fail to keep a promise
back up - move backwards
bear up - endure
blow in - drop in to visit unexpectedly
blow over - pass without doing harm
blow up - explode; lose one's temper
call up - telephone
calm down - become calm
carry on - continue as before; misbehave
catch on - understand
catch up - cover the distance between oneself and a moving goal
check up - investigate
check out - leave; pay one's bill
cheer up - become cheerful
clear out - leave
clear up - become clear
close down - close permanently
close up - close temporarily
came about - happen
come along - accompany; make progress
come back - return
come by - visit someone in his home
come out - appear; make a social debut
come over - come to someone's house, to where someone is
come through - succeed
come to - regain consciousness
cut in - interrupt
die away - fade; diminish
die down - fade; diminish
die off/out - disappear; become extinct
dress up - don fancy or unusual clothes
drive back - return by car
drop in - visit someone casually without planning
drop out - abandon some organized activity; leave; quit
drop over - visit someone casually
fall behind - not progress at required pace

fall off - decrease; lose weight
fall through - fail; not be accomplished
fill in - substitute
find out - learn
fly back - return by air
fly over - fly to where someone is
get ahead - make progress
get along - have a friendly relationship
get around - circulate; move about
get away - escape
get by - manage; either just barely or with a minimum of effort
get in - enter
get off - descend from leave
get on - enter (a vehicle); mount (a horse, etc.)
get on/along - progress; be compatible
get up - rise
get through - finish
give out - become exhausted
give up - surrender; fail to finish
go back - return
go off - explode
go on - happen; continue
go out - stop burning; leave one's residence
go over - go; succeed
grow up - mature
hang around - remain idly; dawdle
hang up - replace a telephone receiver on its hook
hold on - grasp tightly; persevere; wait while telephoning
hold out - continue to resist; persevere; persist
keep on - continue
keep up - maintain the required pace or standard; continue
let up - diminish in intensity
lie down - recline
look on - be a spectator
make out - progress; succeed
make up - become reconciled
move over - move to the side
pan out - turn out well; be successful
pass out - become unconscious
pass on - die
pick up - grow; increase
pull in - arrive
pull out - depart
pull through - survive (barely)
ride over - ride to where someone is
run away - escape; leave; leave quickly without permission
run down - slowly lose power so as to stop functioning
run off - depart running; drain

sell out - sell the ownership or responsibility
settle up - pay one's bills or debts
show off - boast by words or actions
show up - arrive; appear unexpectedly
shut up - stop talking
slow up - reduce speed
stand by - wait; be prepared to assist
stand up - stand; rise from sitting; last; endure
stay over - remain at someone's house overnight or longer
step aside - move to one side
take off - leave the ground
take over - assume command
talk back - answer impolitely
throw up - vomit
turn around - turn so that one is facing another direction
turn in - go to bed
turn out - succeed; come; appear, as at a public meeting
turn up - arrive; be found unexpectedly
wait up - remain awake in anticipation
wake up - awaken
walk back - return on foot to where one was
walk over - walk to where someone is
wash out - fade or disappear from washing
watch out - be careful
wear off - fade; disappear through use or time
wear out - become unusable through use; become used up
work out - be successful