

# Phrasal verbs

## Grammar section

### 1 Meaning and form

The meaning of some phrasal verbs is clear:

*My brother **stayed out** until midnight last night. (~~stayed~~ and ~~out~~ have their normal meanings)*

Many phrasal verbs are idiomatic and you have to learn what they mean. They may contain the same verb but have different meanings, depending on the preposition or adverb which follows:

*He **turned back** because he had left something at home. (= changed direction)*

*He **turned down** the invitation because he was feeling tired. (= refused)*

*They **turned up** unexpectedly. (= arrived)*

*Please remember to **bring back** the notes you borrowed from me. (= return)*

*The change of government **will bring about** many changes in the city. (= will cause)*

*My cousin **was brought up** by his grandparents because his parents worked abroad. (= was raised)*

Some phrasal verbs have several meanings:

*She **put on** her clothes. (= she got dressed)*

*She **put on** weight. (= her weight increased)*

*She **put on** the light. (= she switched the light on)*

*The students **put on** a play. (= performed)*

*Please **get out of** my way, I'm very busy. (= move)*

*The children **got out of** their bedroom window and ran down the fire escape. (= climbed out of)*

*I won't be able to see you tomorrow. I've got a business meeting and I can't **get out of** it. (= avoid)*

The form of phrasal verbs can vary.

Some verbs have **two parts**: a verb (e.g. *do, go*) and another word (sometimes called a particle). This word can be an adverb (e.g. *back, out*) or a preposition (e.g. *at, into, from*). Many of these words (e.g. *down, on, up*) can be both adverbs and prepositions.

Some verbs have **three parts**: a verb (e.g. *come*), an adverb (e.g. *up*) and a preposition (e.g. *against*).

Phrasal verbs behave differently depending on whether they are:

a verb + preposition

a verb + adverb

or a verb + adverb + preposition.

### 2 Verb + preposition

When a phrasal verb consists of a verb and a preposition:

- it always has an object.
- the **object** (noun or pronoun) always goes after the preposition because the verb and preposition must not be separated:

*The rest of the group **looked after** Donna. (~~not looked Donna after~~)  
I **counted on** them. (~~not counted them on~~)*

*They **went over** their plans. (~~not went their plans over~~)  
I really **cared about** them. (~~not cared them about~~)*

### 3 Verb + adverb

When a phrasal verb consists of a verb and an adverb:

- it doesn't always have an object:

*They **got together** every Monday morning.*

*They **carried on** without me.*

- the object (when it is a noun) can come before or after the adverb, because the verb and adverb can be separated:

*They **didn't back** Donna **up** when she was in trouble.*

or *They **didn't back up** Donna when she was in trouble.*

*They wanted to **throw** Donna **out** because of what she did.*

or *They wanted to **throw out** Donna because of what she did.*

*They **called** the concert **off**.*

or *They **called off** the concert.*

- the object (when it is a pronoun) must go between the verb and the adverb:

*They **backed me up**. (~~not backed up me~~)*

*They wanted to **throw me out**. (~~not throw out me~~)*

*They couldn't do the concert without her so they **called it off**. (~~not called off it~~)*

- the object (when it is very long) is usually put after the adverb:

*They **called off** the concert, which had already been postponed twice. (~~not called the concert, which had already been postponed twice, off~~)*

*The students **counted up** the money from their summer jobs and decided to have a party. (~~not The students counted the money from their summer jobs up~~)*

! Some phrasal verbs have two meanings and take an object with one meaning and no object with the other meaning, e.g. *give in*:

*I won't **give in** until they pay me what they owe. (verb + adverb + no object = surrender)*

*I **gave in** my homework on time. (verb + adverb + object = hand it to the teacher)*

! Most particles (e.g. *down, in, off, on, past, through, up, etc.*) can be either adverbs or prepositions:

*She **picked up** the book. or She **picked the book up**. (verb + adverb can be separated by a noun)*

She **came across** some old friends. (not ~~came some old friends across~~) (verb + preposition cannot be separated)

We **tried on** the clothes. or We **tried** the clothes **on**. (verb + adverb can be separated by a noun)

We **tried them on**. (pronoun must go between verb + adverb)

They **lived on** bread and salad for a whole week. (verb + preposition cannot be separated)

A good learner's dictionary gives the pattern to use for each phrasal verb.

#### 4 Verb + adverb + preposition

When a phrasal verb consists of three parts:

- it always has an object.
- the object (noun or pronoun) always goes after the phrasal verb (the three parts cannot be separated):

I always **got on with** the other members of the group.

... I **came up against** some problems

... I **put up with** this for a while.

They're not going to **get away with** it.

Don't let anyone bully you. You must **stand up to** them.

You can't **back out of** this agreement now.

## EXERCISES

**1** Read the sentences below. Try to work out the meaning of the phrasal verbs in bold. Then complete the table below, using one of the meanings in the box.

- 1 We thought it would be a difficult problem to solve, but in the end we **got (a)round** it.
- 2 We don't keep things on the top shelf because we can't **get at** them without standing on the table.
- 3 After Peter had made several unsuccessful attempts to **get through**, he asked the operator to connect him.
- 4 I managed to **get away from** the office just before the rush hour started.
- 5 I was really ill with flu last month, but I've **got over** it now.
- 6 This grey, wet weather really **gets me down**.
- 7 Tamsin is a good speaker who always **gets her message across**.
- 8 Nobody saw who smashed the window, so the boys **got away with** it.
- 9 I've been meaning to tidy the garage for some time, but I'm busy and I never seem to **get (a)round to** it.
- 10 If I can think of a reason to **get out of** the meeting tonight I will.

avoid contact by phone depress  
escape unpunished explain clearly overcome  
have time for leave reach recover from

	particle	use	meaning
GET	<b>across</b>	get a message across	
	<b>(a)round</b>	get (a)round a problem	
	<b>at</b>	get at something	
	<b>away from</b>	get away from a place	
	<b>away with</b>	get away with a crime	
	<b>down</b>	bad weather gets me down	
	<b>out of</b>	get out of a commitment	
	<b>over</b>	get over an illness	
	<b>(a)round to</b>	get round to doing something	
	<b>through</b>	get through to someone on the phone	

**2** Complete these sentences with words from the box below to make phrasal verbs with **get**.

away with down into on with  
out of over round to through

- 1 Simon always manages to get \_\_\_\_\_ doing the washing-up because he says he has a lot of homework.
- 2 My grandfather got \_\_\_\_\_ the flu very quickly because he's such a fit man.
- 3 Maria lives in an area where the phone signal is bad so it's hard to get \_\_\_\_\_ when I try to ring her.
- 4 I tried to take a message but I didn't get \_\_\_\_\_ everything Paula said.
- 5 I can't talk to you now because I must get \_\_\_\_\_ my essay.
- 6 I finally got \_\_\_\_\_ watching a film I recorded two months ago.

- 7 I'm so happy! I've just heard that I've got \_\_\_\_\_ the university I want to go to.
- 8 I can never get \_\_\_\_\_ telling a lie because my face always goes bright red.

**3 Match the two halves of the sentence.**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 He came across some very old letters                 | A when the Russian ballerina came on.                  |
| 2 When the DVD of the concert came out                 | B which means global supplies are good.                |
| 3 I've come up with an idea                            | C was the most difficult problem they came up against. |
| 4 There was great applause from the audience           | D it sold millions of copies.                          |
| 5 The racing driver was unconscious after the accident | E but our plan didn't come off.                        |
| 6 We hoped to visit our friends in Canada last year    | F but to everyone's relief he soon came round.         |
| 7 Oil prices have come down recently                   | G while he was cleaning out the attic.                 |
| 8 Getting permission to cross the border               | H for starting a new business.                         |

**4 Underline the phrasal verbs with *come* in the sentences in Ex 3 and match them to their definitions. Then use one of the phrasal verbs to complete each of the sentences below.**

- come across find by chance  
 \_\_\_\_\_ think of  
 \_\_\_\_\_ fall  
 \_\_\_\_\_ succeed  
 \_\_\_\_\_ be released  
 \_\_\_\_\_ appear on stage  
 \_\_\_\_\_ face (a problem)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ regain consciousness

- 1 The builders couldn't \_\_\_\_\_ an explanation for the delay.
- 2 The new children's film will \_\_\_\_\_ before the start of the school holidays.

- 3 The mechanic \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of difficulties when he tried to fix the old car.
- 4 I think our plan to build an extension on the house is going to \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 It was so hot in the shops I fainted and it took me a minute or two to \_\_\_\_\_.
- 6 It was an hour before the main singer \_\_\_\_\_ to perform.
- 7 I \_\_\_\_\_ a beautiful old vase on one of the stalls in the market.
- 8 The price of electrical goods has \_\_\_\_\_ considerably this year.

**5 Fill in the gaps with phrasal verbs from the box which mean the same as the verbs in brackets. Put them into the correct tense.**

carry on   cut down   go for   put off  
 set off   take in   turn down   turn up

I love this job. Before this, I'd been doing the same rather boring job for years and I didn't really feel like doing it for much longer even though it was extremely well paid. So one day I decided to look for another job, although I realised I might need to \_\_\_\_\_ (*reduce*) (1) what I spent on luxuries if I found something more interesting. Anyway, I \_\_\_\_\_ (*tried to get*) (2) dozens of jobs I saw online, but all my applications were \_\_\_\_\_ (*rejected*) (3). For several months I \_\_\_\_\_ (*continued*) (4) looking for a job but nothing suitable \_\_\_\_\_ (*appeared*) (5) so in the end I booked an expensive holiday. The day before I was due to \_\_\_\_\_ (*leave*) (6) I was called by a TV company who asked me to go for an interview the next day. I \_\_\_\_\_ (*postponed*) (7) my holiday immediately. It was the job of my dreams. I could hardly \_\_\_\_\_ (*absorb*) (8) the news when they offered it to me. And I never went on that holiday!

**6** Fill in the gaps with the correct form of verbs in the box to make phrasal verbs.

break   come   do   give   go   hand  
look   make   turn   work

**On the Run** [US 2015 English 116 mins] suitable for all ages  
starring Rick Feather, Garth Jones, Hank Poliakin and Argenta Flore  
Director Bartolomeo Bransch

The film *On the Run* tells the story of three prisoners who manage to \_\_\_\_\_ (1) out of a jail on an island. One of the prison guards is not very honest, so the prisoners bribe him and he \_\_\_\_\_ (2) over some keys. They \_\_\_\_\_ (3) for a nearby forest and decide to wait there for a bit because they haven't had time to \_\_\_\_\_ (4) out a plan. While they \_\_\_\_\_ (5) over the possibilities, a woman who is walking through the forest \_\_\_\_\_ (6) across them and promises to bring them food each day if they help her to \_\_\_\_\_ (7) for wood. They are hungry and are not very good at \_\_\_\_\_ (8) without their dinner. She is also very beautiful so they accept her offer. But on the third day the woman \_\_\_\_\_ (9) up with a policeman. She \_\_\_\_\_ (10) away their secret in order to get the reward offered.

**7** Replace each of the underlined nouns with a pronoun in the correct place in the sentence. You may find it helpful to check the phrasal verbs in your dictionary.

- I can't give up chocolate however hard I try.  
I can't give it up however hard I try.
- The girl went over her work several times before she was satisfied.  
The girl went over it several times before she was satisfied.
- He was so angry he broke up the sculpture into small pieces.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- We've run out of biscuits – could you fetch some more?  
\_\_\_\_\_

- I could tell from his expression that he'd made up the excuse.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I can't put up with that noise any longer.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I looked after the children while their mother was busy.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Don't forget to put out the lights when you leave.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- With her dark eyes and hair, she takes after her father.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- That shop puts up its prices every month.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- You can't just back out of the deal after you've signed the contract.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- My parents brought up me and my four brothers on a very limited budget.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**KEY TO EXERCISES**

- 1 get around: overcome 2 get at: reach 3 get through: contact by phone 4 get away from: leave 5 get over: recover from 6 get (somebody) down: depress 7 get across: explain clearly 8 get away with: escape unpunished 9 get (a)round to: have time for 10 get out of: avoid
- 1 out of 2 over 3 through 4 down 5 on with 6 round to 7 into 8 away with
- 1G 2D 3H 4A 5F 6E 7B 8C
- come up with: think of come down: fall come off: succeed come out: be released come on: appear on stage come up against: face come round: regain consciousness 1 come up with 2 come out 3 came up against 4 come off 5 come round 6 came on 7 came across 8 come down
- 1 cut down 2 went for 3 turned down 4 carried on 5 turned up 6 set off 7 put off 8 take in
- 1 break 2 hands 3 make 4 work 5 are going 6 comes 7 look 8 doing (going is also possible) 9 turns 10 has given
- 3 broke it up 4 run out of them 5 made it up 6 put up with it 7 looked after them 8 put them out 9 takes after him 10 puts them up 11 back out of it 12 brought us up