



Phrasal Verbs

How they work and how to learn them

Phrasal verbs aren't random. However, often English course books present them in a completely random way which makes them very difficult to learn.

Don't try to learn "Phrasal verbs with take" or "Phrasal verbs with get" or "Phrasal verbs with go". I used to teach them like this. It's a waste of time!

To understand phrasal verbs you have to understand the little words - we call them particles. The most frequently used are up/down, in/out, on/off and back/away.

Little kids learn these words very early. My son is 16 months old. We practice these words all the time!

We take a car and pick it UP and put it DOWN. Up, down, up, down, up, down.

We sit ON the stool and get OFF the stool. ON and OFF. On, off, on off, on, off.

We sit by the toy box and put the blocks IN and take them OUT. In, out, in, out.

These directional meanings are in **GROUP 1**.

Each particle also has some special meanings. You can find these in **GROUP 2**.

Sometimes we use the directional meaning in a metaphorical way. These are in **GROUP 3**.

Some phrasal verbs really are random. These are in **GROUP 4**.

There are some other directions that we use less often, including after, through, over, across, around, past, together and apart. You can find these in **GROUP 5**.

Group 1 - Directions (continued)

fall down

After they were hit on 9/11 both of the Twin Towers **fell down**.

go down

I want to buy one but I am waiting for the price to **go down**.

go down

I **went down** to open the door because our intercom wasn't working.

lie down

I want to **lie down**. I don't feel well.

sit down

Let's **sit down**. The food is almost ready.

calm down

When someone gets less angry, stressed or scared they **calm down**.

cool down

I need to go outside to **cool down**.

slow down

Everyone **slowed down** to look at the accident.

calm __ down

His teammates tried to **calm him down** before he did something stupid.

cool __ down

I'm so hot! I need a drink to **cool me down**.

knock __ down

The government wants to **knock down** my house to build a new road.

put __ down

Put me down! I don't want you to carry me any more.

slow __ down

Please **slow down** the video - I want to look more closely.

take __ down

We usually **take down** our Christmas decorations at the end of January.

turn __ down

The music is too loud. Please **turn it down**.

get on

I usually **get on** the bus at this stop.

step on

Be careful - don't **step on** any dog poo.

hang __ on

Can you **hang** these lights **on** the tree

have __ on

When I saw him he didn't **have** any shoes **on**.

put __ on

He **put on** his coat and walked out.

put __ on

Please **put** the glasses **on** the table.

try __ on

I always **try on** clothes before I buy them.

fall off

I broke my arm when I **fell off** my bicycle.

get off

Get ready! We need to **get off** at the next stop.

jump off

I was too scared to **jump off** the bridge with my friends.

take __ off

He **took off** his coat and sat down.

knock __ off

The cat **knocked** the books **off** the shelf.

get away

The rabbit didn't **get away** from the wolf.

go away

I want to **go away** for a couple of days. I'm tired of this city.

run away

The children **ran away** when the dog started barking.

give __ away

I want to **give away** this furniture.

put __ away

I always **put away** my winter clothes in April.

take __ away

The police grabbed the man and **took him away**.

throw __ away

I had to **throw away** the tomatoes because they were rotten.

come back

We'll miss you. **Come back** soon!

get back

What time will you **get back**?

go back

I will never **go back** there. It's a terrible place!

bring __ back

You can take it home but you must **bring it back** tomorrow.

call __ back

I'm busy now. Can you **call me back** later?

get __ back

My car has been stolen and I don't expect to **get it back**.

give __ back

You can borrow this pen if you **give it back** at the end of the lesson.

pay __ back

When will you **pay back** the money I lent you last week?

put __ back

When you've finished reading **put** the book **back** where you found it.

take __ back

I need to **take** these books **back** to the library.

Group 2 - Special Meanings

OUT = all gone

be out of
run out
run out of
sell out
die out
go out
put out

I'm sorry. We **are out of** time.
My battery is **running out**. I need a charger.
We **ran out of** time so we couldn't do all the tasks.
The tickets **sold out** within 30 minutes.
Mammoths **died out** more than 10 000 years ago.
The fire will **go out** if you don't add some wood.
The firefighters worked hard to **put** the fire **out**.

OUT = known, clear, understood, organised

find out
turn out
find __ out
sort __ out
sort __ out
figure __ out
point __ out
make __ out

Yesterday I **found out** that my friend is going to get married.
The test **turned out** to be easier than I expected.
I want to **find out** more about it.
My life is a mess! I need to **sort it out**!
I have to **sort out** a lot of things for the wedding.
I have **figured out** a way to fix it.
The guide **pointed out** lots of interesting things.
I can just **make out** the shape of a building in the distance.

OFF = start moving

be off
run off
set off
take off
kick off
go off
set __ off
see __ off

I need to **be off** now. I can't stay any longer.
The children **ran off** when they saw the guard.
We **set off** as soon as it got light.
I am always a bit scared when the plane **takes off**.
The match **kicked off** at 15:00.
The fire alarm **went off** so we had to stop the lesson.
If you smoke in the toilet it will **set off** the fire alarm.
My parents came to the station to **see me off**.

ON = working/happening, OFF = not working/not happening

be on
be off
be on
be off
go on
switch __ on
switch __ off
put __ on
call __ off
put __ off

The lights **are still on** in the office.
All the lights **were off** when I got there.
Is the meeting **on** tomorrow?
The game **is off** because the pitch is frozen.
There's always something **going on** in my town.
Oh no! I forgot to **switch on** the washing machine!
Don't forget to **switch off** the lights when you leave.
We want to **put on** a great show!
We had to **call off** the festival because not enough tickets were sold.
When I don't want to do something I **put it off** until the last minute.

ON = forward (onward)

go on
get on
carry on
keep on
move on
come on
pass __ on

The man looked up and then **went on** reading his book.
My parents don't **get on** with my boyfriend.
Keep calm and **carry on** working.
I **keep on** forgetting that word!
Let's **move on** to the next task.
Come on!!! You can do it!
Can you **pass on** a message for me?

Group 2 - Special Meanings (continued)

UP = in pieces

break up	My friend is depressed because his girlfriend broke up with him.	_____
split up	The Beatles split up in 1970.	_____
blow up	Move away from the vehicle. It might blow up .	_____
cut __ up	Take a piece of paper and cut it up .	_____
chop __ up	Take a tomato and chop it up .	_____
tear __ up	He said he was not interested and tore up the contract	_____
rip __ up	She ripped up the letter and dropped it into the fire.	_____
split __ up	If students can't work together it is better to split them up .	_____
blow __ up	Guy Fawkes wanted to blow up the Houses of Parliament.	_____

UP = not asleep

be up	I was surprised that the kids were still up when I came home.	_____
wake up	Wake up! Breakfast is ready!	_____
stay up	I often stay up late at the weekend watching films.	_____
wait up	The boy's parents waited up until he came home.	_____
wake __ up	My cat woke me up at 6am this morning!	_____
keep __ up	My neighbours had a party yesterday and they kept me up until 2am	_____

UP = in order

tidy up	Let's go to bed. We can tidy up in the morning.	_____
clean up	It took us three hours to clean up after the party.	_____
wash up	I cooked so you should wash up .	_____
make up	We can't make up until I believe that you are really sorry.	_____
clear up	We always spend the last 5 minutes of the lesson clearing up .	_____
tidy __ up	I spend all my time tidying up mess that my kids make!	_____
clean __ up	Nobody can leave until this mess is cleaned up .	_____
wash __ up	I washed up the pans last time.	_____
pack __ up	In the morning we packed up our tents and continued our journey.	_____
wipe __ up	Oops! I spilt some milk. Can you give me something to wipe it up ?	_____

UP = completely gone

be up	Our time is up .	_____
shut up	Shut up and do your work.	_____
give up	I give up . I can't do it.	_____
take up	The sofa takes up half the room!	_____
mess up	I know that I messed up . Can you forgive me?	_____
screw up	I got fired because I screwed up too many times.	_____
use __ up	I gave you three chances and you have used them up .	_____
give __ up	I used to smoke but I gave it up last year.	_____
mess __ up	I had a test yesterday and I messed it up completely.	_____
screw __ up	I gave you a chance but you screwed it up .	_____

DOWN = not working, UP = working

be down	The computer system is down so we can't do any work.	_____
break down	We were late because our car broke down .	_____
close down	The shop is closing down so they are selling everything for low prices.	_____
shut __ down	Remember to shut down the computers before you leave.	_____
set __ up	Can you help me to set up a wifi network?	_____
start __ up	I want to start up my own business one day.	_____

Group 3 - Metaphorical Directions

pass away

get away with

get back to

let __ down

write __ down

look down on

fill __ in

take __ in

hand __ in

get into

run into

drop __ off

hold on

put __ on

ask __ out

bring __ out

come out

carry __ out

cross __ out

drop out

eat out

give __ out

go out

go out with

hang out

read __ out

stand out

stick out

freak out

freak __ out

hang up

pick __ up

pick __ up

pick __ up

take __ up

throw up

look up to

warm up

My Grandfather **passed away** last week. The funeral is today.

I can't believe you **got away with** cheating in your exam!

I'll **get back to** you as soon as I have an answer.

I put my trust in you and you **let me down**. I can't forgive you.

Please can you **write down** everything he says.

I don't like it when people **look down on** others because they are rich.

Please **fill in** the gaps with the correct form of the verb.

There was too much information for me to **take in**.

Please **hand in** your homework at the end of the lesson.

If you **get into** difficulty at sea you should call the coastguard.

You'll never guess who I **ran into** today in town - my old piano teacher!

You have to pay £2 to **drop off** passengers outside the airport.

I can't **hold on** much longer. I'm going to fall!

If you eat a lot of cakes you'll **put on** weight quickly.

I was really shy at school and I didn't dare to **ask** any girls **out**.

I can't wait for them to **bring out** the new Pokemon game.

The first Harry Potter book **came out** in 1997.

I want you to **carry out** all my instructions very carefully..

If you make a mistake, **cross** it **out** and write the answer below.

I had to **drop out** of university because the course was too difficult.

I like **eating out** with my friends.

I always feel sorry for people who **give out** leaflets in the street.

I like to **go out** at weekends with my friends.

When I was at school I **went out with** lots of girls.

At the weekends my son's friends often **hang out** at my house.

The teacher asked me to **read out** what I had written.

I like to wear unusual clothes so that I **stand out** from the crowd.

Be careful - your wallet is **sticking out** of your pocket!

I **freaked out** when the airplane started shaking violently.

Spiders **freak** me **out**. I'm so scared of them.

He **hung up** before I had time to explain. He was clearly very angry.

I need to go to the post office to **pick up** a parcel.

I'll **pick** you **up** from outside your house at 18:30 tomorrow.

I called three times but nobody **picked up** the phone.

I realised that I was putting on weight so I **took up** Yoga to get fit.

I was really ill yesterday. I **threw up** three times.

I really **look up to** my dad. He is an inspiration to me.

It's important to **warm up** before you do sports.

Group 4 - Random Particles

believe in

I **believed in** Santa until I was 9.

turn into

It's hard to believe that a caterpillar can **turn into** a butterfly.

turn __ into

She is a great cook. She can **turn** simple ingredients **into** great food.

go off

The chicken has **gone off**. We can't eat it.

pay off

I worked hard all year and it **paid off** - I did very well in the exam.

print __ off

I need to get to school early today to **print off** some worksheets.

show off

I can't stand people who **show off** all the time.

tell __ off

I was a naughty child. My teachers used to **tell me off** all the time.

work on

I am **working on** a couple of projects at the moment.

check __ out

I want to **check out** the new cafe - I've heard that the food is great!

chill out

I like to **chill out** and do nothing on Sundays.

fall out

I've **fallen out** with my friend. We aren't talking at the moment.

catch up

Look how far ahead they are. We will never **catch up**.

catch up with

It was hard for me to **catch up with** my class after I missed 3 lessons.

come up

I have to work hard because my exams are **coming up**.

come up to

I don't like it when people **come up to** me in the street.

end up

I only went into the shop to have a look and I **ended up** spending £90.

look __ up

If you don't know a word you can **look it up** in the dictionary.

make __ up

My children are brilliant at **making up** stories

meet up

I'm coming to London next week. Let's **meet up**!

mix __ up

I always **mix up** two of the boys in my class. They look really similar.

save up

I am **saving up** to buy a new laptop.

set __ up

I've decided to **set up** a meeting between my sister and my colleague.

sign up for

Lots of people have **signed up** for the free English course.

take up

We had to throw out the old TV because it **took up** too much space.

put up with

I don't like my room but I'll **put up with** it. It's only for a week.

Group 5 - Other Particles

go through

The railway **goes through** lots of tunnels.

go round

There are bulls in the field. Lets **go round** it.

go across

We **went across** the river by boat.

go over

The road **goes over** the top of the mountain.

go under

The river **goes under** the house.

go past

The railway **goes past** lots of beautiful places.

go by

Time **goes by** so fast!

go forwards

Go forwards a little bit more and you'll be in the parking space.

go backwards

When I'm driving I prefer not to **go backwards**.

go along

The path **goes along** the river for 3km.

come across

Yesterday I **came across** someone's wallet in the street.

run after

I **ran after** the man who took my wallet but I couldn't catch him.

look after

Who will **look after** the cats while you are on holiday?

name after

This building is **named after** the founder of the university.

be apart

When we **are apart** we call every day.

take __ apart

I like **taking apart** computers and putting them back together again.

fall apart

My car is really old - I'm worried it might **fall apart**!

look forward to

I am **looking forward to** my holiday next week.

fall over

My son has just started to walk, but he **falls over** all the time.

get over

It took him three years to **get over** his divorce. He was really upset.

go over

I have **gone over** this topic three times. I don't want to do it again.

hand __ over

They finally **handed over** the money after hours of negotiation.

knock __ over

Be careful - don't **knock over** any of the glasses.

roll over

He **rolled over** and kissed her on the cheek.

stop over

We **stopped over** in Singapore on our way to Australia.

take over

Trump **took over** from Obama in January 2017.

think __ over

I'll **think it over** and get back to you in a few days.

turn __ over

Please do not **turn over** your tests until I say so.

turn over

The boat **turned over** in the storm.

look around

On the first day we **looked around** the town.

get around

I think the subway is the best way to **get around** the city.

mess around

Our teacher gets angry when we **mess around** during lessons.

turn __ around

It takes a long time to **turn** a big ship **around**.

turn round

I think we are going the wrong way. We should **turn round**.

get through to

I called her three times but I didn't **get through**.

go through

I **went through** a lot of pain and suffering to get this far.

be together

They have **been together** for three years.

get together

My family **gets together** every Christmas.

put __ together

I took my phone apart but I couldn't **put it together** again!

get along

My colleagues and I **get along** very well.