

English Phrasal Verbs **in Use**

70 units of
vocabulary
reference and
practice

Self-study and
classroom use

Michael McCarthy
Felicity O'Dell

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Phrasal verbs: the basics

A What are phrasal verbs?

Phrasal verbs are verbs that consist of a verb and a particle.

verb	particle	example	meaning
look	up	You can look up any new words in your dictionary.	You can find the meaning of any new words in your dictionary.
get	through	I tried to phone her but I couldn't get through .	I tried to phone her but I couldn't get a connection.
make	out	I just can't make Jim out at all.	I just can't understand Jim's behaviour.

Particles are small words which you already know as prepositions or adverbs. Here are some of the most common phrasal verb particles: **about (a)round at away back down for in into off on out over through to up**

B What do I need to know about phrasal verbs?

First you need to know the meaning of the whole phrasal verb as a unit. The Mini dictionary in this book will help you. For example, **look** means to use your eyes and **up** means the opposite of down, but the phrasal verb **look up** can have several different meanings:

Look the word **up** in the dictionary. [**look up** = search for information in a book/computer]

I'll **look you up** next time I'm in London. [**look up** = visit someone you have not seen for a long time] Things are **looking up**. [**look up** = improve]

Next you need to know the grammar patterns of phrasal verbs, e.g. whether the verb takes an object. The table shows the way the grammar patterns are shown in this book and in many dictionaries. Note that **sth** means **something**; **sb** means **someone**.

grammar pattern	comment	example
eat out	the verb is used without an object	We were too tired to cook at home so we decided to eat out . [eat in a restaurant] Not: We decided to eat out a meal .
bring back sth or bring sth back	the verb must have a non-human object	This photograph brings back happy memories . [makes me remember or think about something from the past] Not: This photograph brings back my sister .
ask out sb or ask sb out	the verb must have a human object	I'd love to ask Sally out . [invite Sally to go to a place like a cinema or a restaurant] Not: I'd love to ask my dog out.
look after sb/sth	the object can be either human or non-human	I'll look after the baby while you're cooking. Will you look after my bike while I'm away?
ring sb back	the object must come before the particle	I'll ring you back later. [phone you again] Not: I'll ring back you .
look after sb/sth	the object must come after the particle	Can you look after the dog while I'm away? Not: Can you look the dog after while I'm away?
drop off sb/sth or drop sb/sth off	the object can be before or after the particle	I dropped off the package at her house. [delivered/left] I dropped the package off at her house.

Exercises

1.1 Underline the twelve phrasal verbs in these sentences.

- 1 I sent off the order last week but the goods haven't turned up yet.
- 2 I came across an interesting book in the library. I took down the title. Here it is.
- 3 We asked some friends around to watch a film, but the video was playing up and it eventually broke down.
- 4 I brought up this problem at the last meeting. It's really time to sort out the problem.
- 5 I wish he'd stop messing us about! He's put the meeting off three times and now he wants to call it off altogether.

1.2 Match the twelve phrasal verbs from sentences 1–5 in exercise 1.1 above with their meanings from the box below.

cause inconvenience	deal with	stop working	find	invite home	arrive
post	cancel	write	postpone	not work properly	mention

1.3 Decide which of these sentences contain errors. Explain why they are wrong and suggest a correct answer. Use the table in B to help you.

- 1 That song you just sang brings back memories of my days at college.
- 2 She looked the children after when their mother was in hospital.
- 3 I promised to ring my brother back. He called earlier when I was busy.
- 4 We ate out a wonderful dinner last night.
- 5 It was a beautiful summer evening so I asked the cat out for a drink.

1.4 Sometimes phrasal verbs are followed by a particular preposition to make three-part verbs. Try to learn these prepositions with the phrasal verbs. Look at these examples of three-part verbs, then complete the sentences below with a preposition from the box. Use a dictionary or the Mini dictionary at the back of this book if necessary.



EXAMPLES I'm looking forward to the weekend.
She's been going out with him for six months now.

with	against	with	on	with
------	---------	------	----	------

- 1 She seems to look down people who are less intelligent than her.
- 2 The school decided to do away the language lab as no-one was using it.
- 3 I came up a serious problem when I tried to save my work onto a disk.
- 4 How can some students get away doing no work and yet pass the exams?
- 5 Her son is so horrible. I don't know how she puts up him.

