

## The grammar of phrasal verbs

A phrasal verb is a verb + particle/s (preposition and/or adverb). Phrasal verbs are often used in conversation instead of more formal verbs, e.g. *go on* is preferred in conversation instead of *continue*.

### MEANING OF PHRASAL VERBS:

- Some phrasal verbs have a literal meaning: *Prices have gone up a lot.*
- Many phrasal verbs have a non-literal meaning: *I looked up the word in the dictionary.*
- The same verb with a different preposition has a different meaning:  
*I'm looking after/ for my sister.*
- Some phrasal verbs have more than one meaning, for example, *take off*:  
*The plane took off at 6.* (=leave the ground)  
*He was hot so he took off his jacket.* (=remove)

### TYPES OF PHRASAL VERBS:

There are four main types of phrasal verbs:

1. **VERB + PARTICLE (no object) - intransitive verb:** the verb and particle cannot be separated by other words.

*Mike and Sally aren't getting on very well at the moment.*

*I tried to calm down but I couldn't.*

2. **VERB + PARTICLE + OBJECT / VERB + OBJECT + PARTICLE:** the verb and particle can be separated.

*I sorted out the problem.*

*I sorted the problem out.*

*I sorted it out. / \* ~~I sorted out it.~~*

If a phrasal verb can be separated, it will be shown in the dictionary with sth or sb in the middle: e.g. *try sth on, wake sb up.*

3. **VERB + PARTICLE + OBJECT:** the verb and particle cannot be separated.

*He looked after his parents for many years.*

*\* ~~He looked his parents after for many years.~~*

If a phrasal verb cannot be separated it will be shown in the dictionary with sth or sb after the two parts of the verb: e.g. *look after sb.*

4. **VERB + PARTICLE + PARTICLE + OBJECT:** verb with two particles. The verb and the two particles cannot be separated.

*I don't know how she puts up with his terrible behaviour.*

*He came up with a great idea.*

### Useful ideas:

1. Learn groups of phrasal verbs: it is useful to learn groups of verbs that are used in the same context, e.g. in class - write (sth) down, look up (a word), etc.)

2. Learn the same verb + different particles: sometimes it is easier to remember a group of phrasal verbs which all have the same verb, e.g. look after, look forward to, look up, look for, etc.

3. Sometimes the meaning of the particle (preposition or adverb) helps you understand a phrasal verb, e.g. "back" usually means "return"; "out" usually means "make disappear". Some prepositions can have different meanings:

UP	1. increase/improvement	2. complete/end an action	3. upward direction
DOWN	1. decrease	2. stop	3. downward direction
ON	1. continue	2. wear	3. connect
OFF	1. disconnect	2. depart	

