

## Phrasal Verbs (Idioms)

Many verbs in English are followed by an adverb or a preposition (also called a particle). These two-part verbs are called phrasal verbs. The particle that follows the verb changes the meaning of the phrasal verb in idiomatic ways. For example:

VERB	MEANING	EXAMPLE
drop off	decline gradually	The hill dropped off near the river.
drop off (2)	stop and give something to someone	Would you drop this off at the post office?
drop in	visit someone casually without planning	She dropped in to my apartment yesterday afternoon.
drop out	cease to participate	After two laps, the runner dropped out.

Some particles can be separated from their verb so that a noun or pronoun can be inserted; these are called **separable**. Other particles cannot be separated from their verb and are therefore called **inseparable**. In addition, some phrasal verbs are **intransitive**, meaning that they cannot take on a direct object. It is important to remember that no matter what type of phrase one is dealing with, the verb in the phrase can be conjugated and can change tense as the sentence dictates. Following are a few examples of separable, inseparable, and intransitive phrases:

<b>Separable</b>	add up (meaning: to add)	Correct: She <b>added up</b> the total on her calculator.
		Correct: She <b>added it up</b> on her calculator.
<b>Inseparable</b>	get around (meaning: to evade)	Correct: She always <b>gets around</b> the rules.
		<b>Incorrect:</b> She always <b>gets</b> the rules <b>around</b> (This construction makes no sense in English.)
<b>Intransitive</b>	catch on (meaning: to understand)	Correct: After I explained the math problem, she began to <b>catch on</b> .
		<b>Incorrect:</b> She began to <b>catch on</b> the math problem. ( <i>catch on</i> cannot take a direct object in this meaning.)
		Correct: She began to <b>catch on to</b> the math problem. (the word <i>to</i> makes <i>the math problem</i> an indirect object, which is acceptable in this meaning.)

Unfortunately, there is frequently no indicator whether a phrase is separable, inseparable, or intransitive. In most cases, the phrases must simply be memorized. Following is a partial list of frequently used examples of each type of phrase and their definitions.

**Separable: nouns or pronouns can be added in the middle of these phrases**  
(i.e. when you put a sentence on paper, you *write it out* rather than *write out it*)

<b>add up</b> - add	<b>pass up</b> - not take advantage of (as an opportunity)
<b>back up</b> - cause to move backwards; support; blow up; cause to explode; destroy by explosives	<b>pass on</b> - transmit
<b>break down</b> - analyze; list the parts of separately	<b>pay back</b> - repay
<b>bring about</b> - cause to happen	<b>pay off</b> - pay a debt completely
<b>bring on</b> - cause	<b>pick up</b> - come to meet an escort; lift; learn casually
<b>bring out</b> - publish; emphasize	<b>point out</b> - indicate
<b>bring up</b> - raise; care for from childhood	<b>pull down</b> - pull in a downward direction
<b>burn down</b> - destroy by burning	<b>put off</b> - postpone
<b>buy out</b> - by the other person's share of a business	<b>put on</b> - dress in; deceive or fool
<b>calm down</b> - become calm	<b>quiet down</b> - be quiet
<b>carry on</b> - continue	<b>rinse off</b> - rinse the surface of
<b>carry out</b> - fulfill; complete; accomplish; perform	<b>rinse out</b> - rinse the inside of
<b>cheer up</b> - cause to become cheerful	<b>rule out</b> - eliminate
<b>clean off</b> - clean the surface of	<b>run off</b> - cause to depart; reproduce mechanically
<b>clean up</b> - clarify; tidy	<b>save up</b> - accumulate
<b>close down</b> - close permanently	<b>see through</b> - complete; in spite of difficulties
<b>count out</b> - exclude	<b>send back</b> - send to a place where formerly located
<b>cross out</b> - eliminate	<b>send over</b> - send to where someone is
<b>cut off</b> - interrupt; sever; amputate	<b>set up</b> - arrange
<b>cut out</b> - eliminate; delete	<b>show off</b> - exhibit ostentatiously
<b>cut down</b> - reduce in quantity	<b>shut off</b> - cause to cease functioning
<b>draw up</b> - write; compose (a document)	<b>take back</b> - return; retract a statement
<b>dress up</b> - put clothes on; adorn	<b>take over</b> - take; assume command of
<b>figure out</b> - interpret; understand	<b>tear down</b> - destroy
<b>fill in</b> - complete (a printed form)	<b>tear up</b> - tear into small pieces
<b>fill out</b> - complete (a printed form)	<b>tell off</b> - scold; reprimand
<b>fill up</b> - fill completely (a container)	<b>think over</b> - consider
<b>find out</b> - discover	<b>think through</b> - consider from beginning to end
<b>fix up</b> - repair; arrange in a suitable manner	<b>think up</b> - create; invent
<b>give back</b> - return	<b>throw away</b> - discard
<b>give out</b> - distribute; announce	<b>tie up</b> - tie securely or tight
<b>give up</b> - surrender something	<b>touch up</b> - repair
<b>hand down</b> - deliver; pronounce formally; leave as an inheritance	<b>try on</b> - put on a garment to verify the fit
<b>hand over</b> - yield control of	<b>try out</b> - test
<b>hang up</b> - suspend	<b>turn down</b> - refuse; lower the volume
<b>have on</b> - be dressed in	<b>wash off</b> - wash the surface of
<b>hold off</b> - delay; restrain	<b>wash out</b> - wash the inside of
<b>hold up</b> - delay; rob; threaten with a weapon	<b>wear out</b> - use until no longer usable; tire greatly
<b>keep up</b> - continue; keep the same pace	<b>wind up</b> - finish
<b>leave out</b> - omit	<b>wipe off</b> - wipe the surface of
<b>let down</b> - disappoint	<b>wipe out</b> - wipe the inside of; decimate
<b>let out</b> - release from confinement	<b>work out</b> - solve
<b>live down</b> - live in such a way as to cause something to be forgotten	<b>write down</b> - record
<b>move over</b> - move to the side	<b>write out</b> - write down every detail; spell out
	<b>write up</b> - compose; prepare (a document)

**Inseparable: nouns or pronouns can NOT be added in the middle of these phrases**  
(i.e. when you rely on something happening, you *count on it*, not *count it on*)

**back out of** - desert; fail to keep a promise  
**bear down on** - lean on; browbeat  
**break in on** - interrupt  
**break into** - interrupt  
**call for** - come to get; require  
**care for** - like; guard; supervise; maintain  
**carry on with** - continue  
**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 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  
**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: these phrases cannot take on a direct object**  
 (i.e. you *lie down in the chair*, not *lie down the chair*;  
 you *back down from* your argument, not *back down* your argument;  
 you *catch up to* your jogging companion, not *catch up* your jogging companion)

**back down** - retreat from a position in an argument  
**back out** - desert; fail to keep a promise  
**back up** - move backwards  
**blow over** - pass without doing harm  
**blow up** - explode; lose one's temper  
**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 up** - become clear  
**close down** - close permanently  
**come along** - accompany; make progress  
**come back** - return  
**come out** - appear; make a social debut  
**come over** - come to where someone else is  
**come through** - succeed  
**die off/out** - disappear; become extinct  
**dress up** - don fancy or unusual clothes  
**drive back** - return by car  
**drop out** - abandon some organized activity; leave; quit  
**fall behind** - not progress at required pace  
**fall through** - fail; not be accomplished  
**fill in** - substitute  
**find out** - learn  
**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 on** - enter (a vehicle); mount (a horse, etc.)  
**get up** - rise  
**get through** - finish  
**give up** - surrender; fail to finish  
**go back** - return

**go on** - happen; continue  
**go out** - stop burning; leave one's residence  
**grow up** - mature  
**hang around** - remain idly; dawdle  
**hang up** - replace a telephone receive on its hook  
**hold on** - grasp tightly; persevere; wait  
**hold out** - continue to resist; persevere; persist  
**keep on** - continue  
**keep up** - maintain the required pace or standard; continue  
**lie down** - recline  
**move over** - move to the side  
**pass out** - become unconscious  
**pull through** - survive (barely)  
**run away** - escape; leave; leave quickly without permission  
**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  
**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  
**wake up** - awaken  
**walk back** - return on foot to where one was  
**walk over** - walk to where someone is  
**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