

THE ROLE OF PHRASAL VERBS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Phrasal verbs are combinations of verbs with particles. They are frequently used in colloquial English. In this article, there are information about fully phrasal verbs and their importance. A phrase of at least two words that acts like a verb. This article provides information about the structure of phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs can be misleading because they do not always translate well and sometimes the meaning is not very obvious. So, there is information about their types.

Keywords: phrasal verbs, preposition, adverb, multiple meanings, combinations, structure of phrasal verbs, natural, figurative or idiomatic meanings, a lexical or syntactic level.

Most people try to avoid phrasal verbs. They can be difficult to learn or understand, and there are so many of them! But phrasal verbs really improve people’s English, and when people use them, people’ll automatically sound more natural and more advanced. Phrasal verbs are combinations of verb + adverbial particle, verb (+ adverbial particle) + preposition. English learners can not easily find out its meanings by looking up the individual word in an ordinary dictionary since phrasal verb has a lot of figurative or idiomatic meanings as well as a literal meaning. The origin and development of phrasal verbs (verb + adverbial particle) are attributed to two processes.³⁷In modern English, there are a number of themes. All of them are very

³⁷ Cruz, De la, J.M. “The Origins of the Germanic Phrasal Verb,” *Indogermanische Forschungen* 77/1: 73996, 1973.

interesting as well as important. Phrasal verbs seldom use not only in informal conversations between friends, but also in business situations like meetings and presentations.

In English traditional grammar, a phrasal verb is the combination of two or three words from different grammatical categories – a verb and a particle, such as an adverb or a preposition – to form a single semantic unit on a lexical or syntactic level.³⁸

Phrasal verbs work by changing the verb’s meaning based on the preposition that follows them. People already probably know a lot of these common ones, like “go away”, “come back” or “sit down”, for example.

The word “come,” on its own, means to move towards something. Together with the preposition “on,” though, the phrase “come on” becomes a phrase of encouragement.

Instead of using formal verbs, people can use a phrasal verb that sounds right in normal situations. It’s the difference between saying “Please continue” (formal) and “*Please carry on*” (natural); or between “Enter!” (formal) and “Come in!” (natural).

A phrasal verb is a phrase that’s made up of a verb and another word or two, usually a preposition but sometimes an adverb.

So before we can talk about English phrasal verbs, it’s important to understand what verbs, prepositions and adverbs are. A verb is an action word. It describes something happening (e.g. hearing, seeing), a state of being (e.g. to live, to sleep), or an action being done (e.g. to read, to sing).

A preposition is a word that describes the relationship between two words. For example, the bees are above the table or under the table, but not inside the table (hopefully). Prepositions mainly deal with location or direction (e.g. on, through, around) and time (e.g. “by” or “around” a certain time).

³⁸Huddleston, Rodney; Quirk, Randolph; Greenbaum, Sidney; Leech, Geoffrey; Svartvik, Jan (June 1988). "A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language". *Language*. 64 (2): 345. doi:10.2307/415437. ISSN 0097-8507. JSTOR 415437.

An adverb is a word that describes a verb. For example, you can run quickly or slowly and arrive to class early or late.

Phrasal verbs are differentiated from other classifications of multi-word verbs and free combinations by criteria based on idiomaticity, replacement by a single-word verb, wh-question formation and particle movement.³⁹

Phrasal verbs are multiword combinations of Verb + Adverb, Verb + Preposition, or Verb + Adverb AND Preposition that function like one-word verbs. They can be transitive or intransitive. One of the most important and challenging characteristics of phrasal verbs is that the meaning of the combination is often quite different from the meaning of the original verb by itself.

For example, the phrasal verb hang out, which means “to stay somewhere for a while without doing much,” has a completely different meaning from the verb hang. Likewise, the phrasal verb pass out, which means “to fall asleep or become unconscious,” has a very different meaning from the verb pass. Finally, the phrasal verb put up with, which means “to tolerate,” has little connection to the meaning of put. The sentences below illustrate these differences.

hang out vs. hang

Ex: The kids in the neighborhood hang out at the corner store.

Ex: He is going to hang the mirror on the wall.

pass out vs. pass

Ex: They both passed out in front of the TV.

Ex: Stand here and don't let anyone pass.

Put up with vs. put

Ex: At this school, we will not put up with bad behavior.

Ex: Put the car in the garage.

Multiple meanings

². A Comprehensive grammar of the English language. Quirk, Randolph. London: Longman. 1985. ISBN 0-582-51734-6. OCLC 11533395.

Another challenging thing about phrasal verbs is that they often have more than one meaning. The phrasal verb pass out, for example, can mean to fall asleep, as mentioned above, but it can also mean to distribute, as in this sentence:

Ex: The teacher hasn't finished passing out the tests yet.

Phrasal verbs are great to practice people's English tenses! They are very versatile; people can change them into any tense they like. When conjugating a phrasal verb, only change the Verb part of the phrase, and not the Preposition part.

Ex. GOOD = My dog passed away.

INCORRECT = My dog pass awayed.

INCORRECT = My dog passed awayed.

Here some examples for phrasal verbs:

Call off / Call (something) off – to cancel

Ex. We need to call off the meeting due to the weather.

Ex. We need to call the meeting off because it is going to rain.

Calm down – relax after being angry

Ex. You can sit with us after you have calmed down.

Eat out – eat at a restaurant

Ex. Let's make spaghetti tonight, I'm tired of eating out.

Hold on – wait for a moment

Ex. Hold on one minute, I'm on the phone.

Keep on (doing something) – continue what you are doing

Ex. I asked her to wait, but she kept on walking.

Give up / Give (something) up – stop trying, quit

Ex. I gave up smoking last year.

Throw away / Throw (something) away – put in the garbage, dispose of

Ex. I accidentally threw away my dessert!

Turn up – appear suddenly

Ex. My watch turned up in the washing machine.

Turn down / Turn (something) down - refuse

Ex. I didn't feel good about the offer, so I turned it down.

Wake up – stop sleeping

Ex. She was so loud, that she woke up the baby.

Work out – be successful

Ex. He wasn't happy at first, but it all worked out in the end.

An extension of the concept of *phrasal verb* occurs via compounding when a verb+particle complex is nominalized. The particles may come before or after the verb. If it comes after, there may be a hyphen between the two parts of the compound noun.

to set out → *outset*:

We **set out** on a quest for the holy grail.

Our quest was doomed from the **outset**

to put in → *input*:

Don't be scared to **put** your own ideas **in**.

Try to come to the meeting – we'd value your **input**.

to stand by → *standby*:

The fire brigade is **standing by** in case of emergency.

We are keeping the old equipment on **standby** in case of emergency.

to back up → *back-up*:

Neil will **back you up** if you need it

Neil will give you any **backup** you need.

Phrasal verbs are important because they are extremely common in informal English, and unless you are familiar with their meanings, understanding informal language will be difficult. In addition, learning to use phrasal verbs correctly will help you sound natural in casual conversation. They're important because English speakers use phrasal verbs all the time. They are extremely common in conversations, and that makes them essential to mastering the language.

Something that we don't often mention is that phrasal verbs add interest to English. They can help people to create images in someone's mind.

For example, the verb “cling” means “hold tightly”. A baby monkey clings to its mother when it’s carried, for example, “Cling-film” is the clear plastic we use to wrap sandwiches. So when a politician “clings on” to power, he / she is a little desperate, and doesn’t want to lose his / her job.

Or, for example, the phrasal verb “*squirrel away*”. Squirrels hide nuts for winter, so if someone “squirrels away” money, people get the image of a person who hides small amounts of money in different places.

Part of their bad reputation comes from ineffective and boring learning approaches but look at it this way: Phrasal verbs will help you express yourself with a lot more ease. That’s simply because sometimes using a phrasal verb is the only way to express an idea.

A big part of the frustration when learning phrasal verbs stems from ineffective and confusing learning approaches. For instance, the most common way to teach them, which is grouping the phrasal verb by verb (make up, make out, make fun, etc.) does not work for many people. It can be confusing because the verbs look the same but with definitions that are completely different. How could people memorize things that have no clear logical connection? It makes no sense because our brains need connections to absorb the information properly.

The important thing is not to overwhelm yourselves with an endless list of phrasal verbs but instead, set realistic goals. It’s impossible to take in the meaning of all of them at once, as there are thousands!

Knowing how to use at least a few phrasal verbs will help people become more flexible as an English speaker, so that people can speak English naturally in a range of situations. (This is what makes you advanced!) Phrasal verbs also help people to expand their vocabulary so they have more ways of saying the same thing. Using phrasal verbs in this way gives an extra meaning to English, making it more dramatic and fun than simpler words.

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