

# PHRASAL VERBS

**act up:** misbehave (for people); not work properly (for machines).  
"The babysitter had a difficult time. The children acted up all evening."

**act like:** behave in a way that's like.  
"What's wrong with Bob? He's acting like an idiot."

**add up:** find the total.  
"What's the total of those bills? Could you add them up and see?"

**back off:** not follow a threat.  
"Tom was ready to call the police when I told him I'd wrecked his car, but he backed off when I said I'd pay for the damages."

**back up (1):** move backward; move in reverse.  
"The people waiting in line are too close to the door. We won't be able to open it unless they back up."

**back up (2):** confirm a story, facts, or information.  
"If you don't believe me, talk to Dave. He'll back me up."

**back up (3):** make a "protection" copy to use if there are problems with the original.  
"When my computer crashed, I lost many of my files. It's a good thing I backed them up."

**blow up (1):** explode; destroy by exploding.  
A: "That old building really came down quickly!"  
B: "That's because the construction company used dynamite to blow it up."

**blow up (2):** suddenly become very angry.  
"When I told Jerry that I'd had an accident with his car, he blew up."

**break down:** stop working or functioning.  
"Sharon will be late for work today. Her car broke down on the freeway."

**break in:** enter by using force and breaking a lock, window, etc.  
"Jane's apartment was burglarized last night. Someone broke in while Jane was at the movies."

**break up:** end a personal relationship.  
"I'm sorry to hear that their marriage broke up. I'm sure the divorce will be difficult for the children."

**bring up:** raise; rear.  
"Lucy's parents died when she was a baby. Her grandparents brought her up."

**burn up:** cause someone to become very angry.  
"Did you hear how rudely Fred talked to me? That really burned me up!"

**butt in:** impolitely interrupt a conversation, an action.  
"Hey, you! Don't butt in! Wait for your turn!"

**butter up:** praise someone excessively with the hope of getting some benefit.  
"I guess Marty really wants to be promoted. He's been buttering his boss up all week."

**call off:** cancel something that has been scheduled.  
"We don't have school today. The mayor called classes off because of the snow."

**calm down:** become calm, less agitated or upset.  
"Why are you so upset? Suzie didn't intend to spill orange juice on you. Calm down!"

**care for:** take care of; supply care to; attend, watch.

"Amy's father got out of the hospital last week. The family is caring for him at home."

**catch on:** develop understanding or knowledge of something.

"Bill had never used a computer until he took this class, but he caught on very quickly and is now one of the best students."

**catch up with:** stop being behind.

"Terry stopped to rest for a few minutes. He'll catch up with us later."

**check in:** register for at a hotel, conference, etc.; let someone know officially that you have arrived.

"When you arrive at the conference, be sure to check in at the registration desk."

**check out:** follow procedures for leaving a hotel, etc.

"Don't forget to take your room key to the front desk when you check out."

**cheer up:** help someone feel less worried, depressed, sad.

"Suzie's brother was depressed about not getting a promotion, so she sent him a funny card to cheer him up."

**chew out:** scold someone severely; berate.

"Tom's father was really angry when Tom didn't come home until 3:00 AM. He chewed Tom out and then said Tom had to stay at home for two weeks."

**come across:** find unexpectedly.

"I've lost my extra car keys. If you come across them while you're cleaning the room, please put them in a safe place."

**come down with:** become ill with.

"George won't be at the office today. He came down with the flu over the weekend."

**count on:** depend on; trust that something will happen or that someone will do as expected.

"I'm counting on you to wake me up tomorrow. I know I won't hear the alarm."

**cut back:** use less of something.

"You drink too much coffee. You should cut back."

**do in:** to kill; to murder.

"The said that the murdered man was done in between 10 and 11 o'clock last night."

**do over:** do something again.

"Oh, no! I forgot to save my report before I turned the computer off! Now I'll have to do it over!"

**drag on:** last much longer than expected or is necessary.

"I thought the meeting would be a short one, but it dragged on for more than three hours."

**drop off:** deliver something; deliver someone by giving him a ride.

"You don't have to take a taxi. You live fairly close to me, so I'll be happy to drop you off."

**drop in:** visit informally and usually without scheduling a specific time.

"If you're in town next month, we'd love to see you. Please try to drop in."

**drop out:** stop attending, leave school or an organization.

"No, Paul isn't at the university. He dropped out."

**eat out:** have a meal in a restaurant.

"I'm too tired to cook tonight. Why don't we eat out?"

**end up:** arrive somewhere as a result or consequence.

"You're working too hard. If you don't take it easy, you'll end up in the hospital!"

**face up to:** admit to; take responsibility for.

"You can't pretend that you're doing OK in this course, Joe. Sooner or later, you'll have to face up to the fact that you're failing it."

**figure out:** logically find the answer to a problem; solve a problem by thinking about it carefully.

"For a long time I couldn't understand the last problem, but I finally figured it out."

**figure out:** understand why someone behaves the way she does.

"I can't figure Margie out. Sometimes she's very warm and friendly and sometimes she acts as if she doesn't know me."



**fill in:** add information to a form.

"The office needs to know your home address and phone number. Could you fill them in on this form?"

**fill out:** complete a form by adding required information.

"Of course I completed my application! I filled it out and mailed it over three weeks ago!"

**find out:** learn, get information.

"I'm sorry that you didn't know the meeting had been canceled. I didn't find out myself until just a few minutes ago."

**get across:** make something understood; communicate something understandably.

"Alan is really intelligent but sometimes he has problems getting his ideas across."

**get along:** have a friendly relationship with; be friendly.

"Why can't you and your sister get along? Everyone else gets along with her just fine!"

**get around:** move from place to place.

"She doesn't have a car. She gets around by bicycle, bus, or taxi."

**get by:** survive, financially, in a difficult situation.

"It's going to be hard to pay the rent now that you've lost your job, but somehow we'll get by."

**get in:** enter a small, closed vehicle.

"I don't know where Carole was going. She just got in her car and drove away."

**get off:** leave a large, closed vehicle.

"When you get off the bus, cross the street, turn right on Oak Street, and keep going until you're at the corner of Oak and Lincoln Boulevard."

**get over (1):** finish.

"What time do your classes get over?"

**get over (2):** recover from an illness or painful experience.

"Katy was really upset when she failed the test. She thought she would never get over feeling so stupid."

**get rid of:** dispose of; give away or throw away.

"That shirt is really ugly. Why don't you get rid of it?"

**get rid of:** dismiss someone; fire someone from a job; cause someone to leave.

"The treasurer of the Microsoft Company was spending too much money so the company president got rid of him."

**give up:** stop doing something (usually a habit).

"He knows smoking isn't good for his health, but he can't give it up."

**grow up:** spend the years between being a child and being an adult.

"Did you know that Frank grew up in Malaysia?"

**grow up:** behave responsibly; behave as an adult, not a child.

A: "Lee really irritates me sometimes. He's really silly and childish."

B: "I agree. I wish he would grow up."

**hand in:** submit homework, an assignment, etc.

"You'd better get started on your report. You know that you have to hand it in at 8:30 tomorrow morning!"

**hand out:** distribute.

"Why don't you have a course description and list of assignments? The teacher handed them out on the first day of class."

**hang up:** end a phone conversation by replacing the receiver.

"I'd like to talk longer, but I'd better hang up. My sister needs to make a call."

**hold up:** delay.

"I'm sorry I'm late. There was an accident on the freeway and traffic held me up."

**keep on:** continue

"I'm not ready to stop yet. I think I'll keep on working for a while."

**kick out:** expel; force someone to leave because of his poor performance or unacceptable behavior.

"Jim's club kicked him out because he didn't pay his dues or come to meetings."

**knock out:** make unconscious.

"That medicine really knocked me out. I slept for 14 hours straight!"

**lay off:** dismiss someone from a job because of lack of work or money (not because of poor performance)

"I feel really sorry Sally's family. Her father was laid off yesterday."

**leave out:** forget; omit.

"Oh, no! When I made the list of those who attended the meeting, I left your name out!"

**let down:** disappoint.

"I know I let you down when I didn't do what I promised. I'm really sorry."

**look forward to:** anticipate pleasantly; think about a pleasant thing before it happens

"I'm really looking forward to vacation. I can't wait for it to begin!"

**look into:** investigate, get more details about something.

"Someone said there was a meeting at 9:30 but I haven't heard anything about it. Shall I look into it?"

**look like:** resemble in appearance.

"Does he look like his father or his mother?"

**look over:** check; review.

"I think I may have some typos in this report. Could you look it over?"

**look up:** find something in a reference work.

"I'm sorry, but I don't know what that word means. I'll have to look it up."

**make fun of:** make jokes about.

"I agree that Bob looks ridiculous since he shaved his head, but don't make fun of him. You'll hurt his feelings."

**make up:** invent imaginary information.

"Judy's story is hard to believe. I'm sure she made it up."

**make up:** compensate for something missed or not done by doing extra or equivalent work.

"I'm sorry I missed the test. May I make it up?"

**mix up:** cause to become confused.

"I didn't complete the assignment because I didn't know how. The directions mixed me up

**pass away:** die.

"I was very sorry to hear that your grandfather passed away."

**pass out:** faint; lose consciousness.

"When Ella heard that she'd won a million dollars, she was so shocked that she passed out."

**pass out:** distribute.

"Everyone in the room needs one of these information sheets. Who will help me pass them out?"

**pick out:** choose; select.

"Billy's grandmother especially liked her birthday card because Billy had picked it out himself."

**pick up:** lift; take up.

"Those books don't belong on the floor. Will you help me pick them up?"

**pull over:** drive a vehicle to the side of the road.

"When the policeman indicated that I should pull over, I knew he was going to give me a ticket."

**put off:** postpone; delay; avoid.

"I can't put this work off any longer. If I don't do it soon, it'll be impossible to finish it in time."

**put on:** begin to wear.

"It's a little bit chilly outside. You'd better put a sweater on."

**put up with:** tolerate.

"It's really important to come to work on time. The boss won't put up with tardiness."

**run into:** meet by chance.

"Yesterday at the supermarket, Jan ran into her former roommate. Before yesterday, they hadn't seen each other for nearly five years."

**run out of:** use the last of.

"On the way home from work, Art ran out of gas."

**set up:** make arrangements for something.

"You'll see Mr. Thomas tomorrow. I've set a meeting up for 9:30 AM."

**stand out:** be noticeably better than other similar people or things.

"Good job, Ann! Your work really stands out!"

**show up:** arrive; appear.

"The boss was very upset when you didn't show up for the meeting. What happened?"

**stand for:** represent.

"These letters seem to be an abbreviation. Do you know what they stand for?"

**stand for:** tolerate; permit (usually negative).

"I'm not surprised that Mrs. Johnson rejected your report. She won't stand for shoddy work."

**take after:** resemble; favor (in appearance).

"Both my sister and I take after our father."

**take back:** return.

"This book is due tomorrow. I guess I should take it back to the library."

**take care of:** provide care for; watch one's health.

"You've been working too hard lately. You'd better take care of yourself!"

**take off:** remove something you're wearing.

"Please take your hat off when you go inside a building."

**take off:** leave; depart (often suddenly or quickly).

"When does your plane take off?"

**take up:** begin a hobby or leisure-time activity.

A: "Do you like to ski?"

B: "I've never been skiing, but I think I'd like to take it up."

**try on:** wear something briefly to check its fit, how it looks, etc.

"I'm not sure that jacket is large enough. May I try it on?"

**try out:** use a machine briefly to determine how well it works.

"I really like the way this car looks. May I try it out?"

**turn around:** move so that you are facing the opposite direction.

"Everyone turned around and stared when I entered the meeting late."

**turn down:** decrease the volume.

"Your music is giving me a headache! Please turn it down or use your headphones!"

**turn down:** refuse.

"I thought I could borrow some money from Joe, but when I asked, he turned me down."

**turn in:** give, deliver, submit to someone.

"I've written my report, but I haven't turned it in."

**turn off:** stop by turning a handle or switch.

"I'm cold. Do you mind if I turn the air conditioner off?"

**turn off:** bore; repel (very informal).

"That music turns me off. Please play something else!"

**turn on (1):** start by turning a handle or switch.

"It's cold in here. I'm going to turn the heater on"

**turn on (2):** interest very much; excite (very informal).

"What kind of music turns you on?"

**turn up:** increase the volume.

"I can barely hear the TV. Can you turn it up a little?"

**turn up:** appear unexpectedly.

"We were all surprised when Pam turned up at the party. We didn't even know she was in town."

**watch out for:** be careful of; beware of.

"There's a school at the end of this block. Watch out for children crossing the street."

**wear out:** cause to become exhausted; cause to become very tired.

"I had four different meetings today. They wore me out."

**work out (1):** exercise to build muscles, body tone, etc.

"Instead of eating lunch on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, Sheila goes to the recreation center to work out."

**work out (2):** solve a problem, resolve a difficult situation (usually by working together).

"I know we disagree on many points, but I believe we can work things out."

**wrap up (1):** wear enough clothes to keep warm.

"It's really cold today. Be sure you wrap up when you leave the house."

**wrap up (2):** finish something; bring something to a conclusion.

"We've been talking about the problem for nearly three hours.

I hope we'll be able to wrap the discussion up soon."

**write down:** record something in writing.

"Could you tell me your e-mail address again? I want to write it down."

**write up:** record; report in writing.

"You'll need to make a report on your business meetings. Be sure you write them up as soon as possible after you return from your trip."

**zonk out:** fall asleep quickly because of exhaustion.

"I intended to go shopping after work, but I was so tired that I zonked out as soon as I got home."

