

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Using Phrasal Verbs

Idioms or idiomatic expressions are ways of expressing ideas that over time become accepted as standard usage in language even though they are often not readily understandable from their grammatical construction or from the meaning of their parts. Many idioms are created by adding a preposition to a basic verb, which forms a verb phrase known as a phrasal verb that is different from the meaning of the verb alone. For example, the verb "to drop" means "to let something fall." In contrast, as a phrasal verb "**drop in**" means "to visit someone without having received an invitation," whereas "**drop out**" means "to stop doing what one usually does."

You will find that many phrasal verbs have more than one meaning. For example, "**turn in**" means "to give something to someone," as in "I turned in my test paper to the instructor." However, it can also mean "to go to sleep," as in "Because it was late, I decided to turn in for the night." Sometimes a difference in syntax or word order of a phrasal verb can also result in different idiomatic meanings. Because idiomatic usage is quite irregular, it can be learned more efficiently by memorization and frequent practice than by learning rules. The following list of phrasal verbs will help you master a variety of idiomatic combinations. Each section presents a basic verb with several idioms that have been derived by choosing the right prepositions to form phrasal verbs.

COMMON PHRASAL VERBS

Idioms Using "Break"

- **break down**
Meaning: stop working
Example: I was late to school because my car broke down.
- **break even**
Meaning: neither gain nor lose
Example: I was lucky to break even at the casino last weekend.
- **break in**
Meaning: initiate, train
Example: The cowboy worked long and hard to break in the new horse.
- **break off**
Meaning: end abruptly
Example: She broke off the conversation by hanging up the telephone.

- **break out**
 Meaning: escape
 Example: Three prisoners broke out of jail.

 Meaning: happen suddenly
 Example: A huge fire broke out on the fifth floor.
- **break through**
 Meaning: penetrate
 Example: The explorer broke through the underbrush to find the temple.
- **break up**
 Meaning: end a relationship
 Example: Mary broke up with Joe more than a year ago.

 Meaning: end an event
 Example: The police broke up the demonstration.

Idioms Using "Bring"

- **bring about**
 Meaning: cause
 Example: She hopes to bring about a change in his attitude.
- **bring in**
 Meaning: yield, earn
 Example: His investments bring in a profit each year.
- **bring on**
 Meaning: cause
 Example: The assassination brought on the first world war.

 Meaning: cause to come forth, produce
 Example: Bring on the wine!
- **bring [something] on [oneself]**
 Meaning: cause problems for oneself
 Example: By refusing to listen to his teacher, he brought the failure on himself.
- **bring out**
 Meaning: emphasize
 Example: That blue shirt brings out the color of your eyes.

 Meaning: inspire
 Example: That teacher is able to bring out the best in her students.

- **bring to mind**
Meaning: remind someone of
Example: The smell of baking bread brings my mother's kitchen to mind.
- **bring up**
Meaning: raise, rear
Example: After my parents died, I was brought up by my grandmother.
Meaning: introduce
Example: She brought up the subject of having children.
- **bring down**
Meaning: cause to fail
Example: The war brought down the government.

Idioms Using "Call"

- **call it a day**
Meaning: stop an activity
Example: The ballet master told the dancers that it was time to call it a day.
- **call [something] off**
Meaning: cancel [something]
Example: The picnic was called off because of the rain.
- **call on**
Meaning: visit
Example: We plan to call on the Smith family when we visit Arizona.

Meaning: select
Example: The teacher called on Juan for an answer to her question.
- **call it quits**
Meaning: stop an activity, end a relationship
Example: Brenda and Eddie called it quits before their second anniversary.
- **call up**
Meaning: telephone
Example: A salesman called me up this morning.

Meaning: induct, summon
Example: The army called up twenty men from my home town.
- **call the roll**
Meaning: take attendance
Example: The professor stopped calling the roll after two weeks of class.

- **call out**
 Meaning: speak loudly
 Example: Call out your name when I point at you.

 Meaning: challenge
 Example: He called her out on her racist remark

Idioms Using "Come"

- **come about**
 Meaning: happen
 Example: The event you were waiting for has come about.
- **come across**
 Meaning: find unexpectedly
 Example: Reading a book I came across a photo of my hometown.

 Meaning: provide services on demand
 Example: She pressured her manager, but he didn't come across with her raise.
- **come across as**
 Meaning: give the impression of
 Example: He comes across as a reasonable man, but in fact, he is crazy.
- **come down with [an illness]**
 Meaning: get [an illness]
 Example: I don't feel well; I think I'm coming down with the flu.
- **come in handy**
 Meaning: prove useful
 Example: I knew the batteries would come in handy in an emergency.
- **come out**
 Meaning: be published, appear
 Example: The new issue of the magazine came out last week.

 Meaning: reveal one's homosexuality
 Example: His parents were shocked when he came out.

 Meaning: emerge
 Example: From our discussion it came out that we all disagreed on every point.
- **come through**
 Meaning: survive
 Example: She came through her illness at last.

- **come through for**
Meaning: support through difficulty
Example: He really came through for me when my daughter was in the hospital.
- **come up**
Meaning: be mentioned
Example: We were talking about students, and your name came up.

Meaning: happen
Example: I didn't know what to do because the situation had never come up.

Idioms Using "Do"

- **do away with**
Meaning: dispose of, eliminate, abolish
Example: To do away with social injustice was her goal.

Meaning: kill
Example: The villain decided to do away with his mother.
- **do over**
Meaning: repeat
Example: The only way to correct the mistakes was to do the assignment over.

Meaning: redecorate, refurbish
Example: It was very frustrating to wait six months to do my apartment over.
- **do without**
Meaning: give up, forego
Example: When my father lost his job, we had to do without many luxuries.
- **have nothing to do with**
Meaning: shun, avoid
Example: The new neighbors are unfriendly and will have nothing to do with us.
- **do in**
Meaning: tire, exhaust
Example: After running five miles without stopping, I was done in.

Meaning: kill
Example: I was so angry that I wanted to do him in, but I didn't.

Idioms Using "Get"

- **get ahead**
Meaning: advance, prosper, succeed
Example: He studied hard in order to get ahead.

- **get over**
 Meaning: overcome, recover
 Example: She got over her cold after two weeks.

- **get around**
 Meaning: travel widely, frequently
 Example: They get around a lot.

 Meaning: avoid, evade
 Example: They got around the high prices by growing their own vegetables.

- **get hold of (get ahold of)**
 Meaning: contact
 Example: I got hold of him by telephone.

- **get out of**
 Meaning: remove from
 Example: Get him out of here.

- **get up**
 Meaning: arise from a sitting or lying position
 Example: I get up every day at seven.

- **get after**
 Meaning: criticize
 Example: He will get after you if you don't do your work well.

- **get by**
 Meaning: pass
 Example: She was so pregnant that I couldn't get by her in the hall.

 Meaning: survive
 Example: Times are hard, but we will get by somehow.

Idioms Using "Give"

- **give and take**
 Meaning: compromise
 Example: We hope there will be some give and take at the conference table.

- **give in**
 Meaning: yield, accept a position or viewpoint one had opposed
 Example: We expected the other side to give in.

- **give out**
 Meaning: cease functioning because of age or deterioration
 Example: We were afraid that our tires would give out during the trip.

- **give way**
 Meaning: collapse
 Example: The town was flooded when the dam gave way.

 Meaning: yield
 Example: The boss refused to give way to the workers.
- **give up**
 Meaning: surrender
 Example: The soldiers gave up when they knew they were beaten.

 Meaning: stop
 Example: The dancers would not give up practicing despite being tired.
- **given to**
 Meaning: in the habit of
 Example: Because he was given to fast driving, his license was soon suspended.

Idioms Using "Keep"

- **keep house**
 Meaning: manage a home
 Example: He found it hard to keep house when his wife left him.
- **keep out of**
 Meaning: stay away from
 Example: Last year he was warned several times to keep out of trouble.
- **keep [one's] word**
 Meaning: fulfill a promise
 Example: John has lied to me so often that I will never trust him to keep his word.
- **keep track of**
 Meaning: stay in touch with, find the whereabouts of
 Example: Unfortunately, I can never keep track of my glasses.
- **keep up**
 Meaning: maintain, preserve
 Example: We can no longer afford to keep up the stables and the formal garden.
- **keep up with**
 Meaning: stay abreast of
 Example: The third runner kept up with the second one.
- **keep still**
 Meaning: be quiet
 Example: He told his little girl to keep still during the performance.

Idioms Using "Let"

- **let alone**
Meaning: stop disturbing
Example: Tell Charles to let that boy alone.
- **let down**
Meaning: disappoint, fail
Example: Mrs. Smith is so reliable that I know she will never let me down.
- **let go**
Meaning: release
Example: The police told the terrorist to let the hostages go.
- **let off**
Meaning: permit to leave
Example: Ask the bus driver to let you off at Fifth Avenue.

Meaning: to excuse
Example: They caught me with the stolen items, but the judge let me off.
- **let pass**
Meaning: overlook, disregard
Example: I will let your remarks pass.
- **let up**
Meaning: pause, decrease in intensity
Example: The storm did not let up until the following day.
- **let out**
Meaning: lengthen, expand
Example: He had gotten taller and fatter, so I had to let out his pants.

Idioms Using "Look"

- **look after**
Meaning: take care of
Example: Someone has to look after the children while we are away.
- **look forward to**
Meaning: anticipate with pleasure
Example: I am really looking forward to meeting you!
- **look into**
Meaning: investigate
Example: Should the police to look into the disappearance of your jewelry?

- **look like**
 Meaning: resemble
 Example: My dog looks like Lassie.

 Meaning: seem possible or probable
 Example: It looks like we won't be going on vacation this year.
- **look out for**
 Meaning: be careful of
 Example: When you go on the hike, look out for bears.

 Meaning: be responsible for, tend
 Example: Her big brother looked out for her when she started school.
- **look up to**
 Meaning: admire
 Example: Her students really look up to her.
- **look over**
 Meaning: examine, inspect
 Example: Look over the papers before you sign them.

Idioms Using "Make"

- **make up**
 Meaning: invent
 Example: As it turned out, he had made the whole thing up.

 Meaning: reconcile
 Example: He tried to make up with his girlfriend by buying her flowers.
- **make a living**
 Meaning: earn money, support oneself
 Example: While I was a student, I made a living by babysitting.
- **make headway**
 Meaning: progress
 Example: There is less traffic in the evenings, so we should make better headway.
- **make up one's mind**
 Meaning: decide
 Example: I like both choices, so I can't make up my mind.
- **make room for**
 Meaning: clear a space for
 Example: By pushing our chairs together, we were able to make extra room.

- **make sure**
Meaning: ascertain
Example: Make sure you have your books with you before you leave.
- **make good**
Meaning: succeed
Example: Even as a young girl, she knew she would make good someday.
- **make good time**
Meaning: get somewhere quickly
Example: The trip only took us an hour because we made good time.
- **make out**
Meaning: succeed
Example: I made out pretty well on that test.

Meaning: perceive, read
Example: I can't make out the signature on this document.

Meaning: engage in kissing and caressing
Example: The teenagers were making out in the bushes during the party.
- **make do with [something]**
Meaning: accept a substitute
Example: I wanted steak, but I had to make do with peanut butter.

Idioms Using "Put"

- **put off**
Meaning: postpone, delay
Example: George put off writing his paper until the night before it was due.
- **put on**
Meaning: dress oneself in
Example: Put on your raincoat for the weather looks bad.

Meaning: fool [someone]
Example: He said he was a famous actor, but he was just putting us on.
- **put out**
Meaning: annoyed, irritated
Example: Because he lost the election, the candidate was put out at his staff.

Meaning: have sex with someone
Example: She thought she would be more popular if she put out on the first date.

- **put something over on [someone]**
Meaning: trick [someone]
Example: The dishonest merchant tried to put something over on us.
- **put up a fight**
Meaning: resist
Example: They may force me to leave school, but I will put up a fight before I go.
- **put across**
Meaning: present or deliver convincingly
Example: Jennifer got the job because she was able to put across her ideas.
- **put down**
Meaning: insult, degrade
Example: Edward was angry because his boss continued to put him down.
- **put away**
Meaning: store in the proper place
Example: Adrienne's father told her to put her toys away.

Idioms Using "Run"

- **run up**
Meaning: accumulate
Example: Alex ran up a large bill at the bar.
- **run across**
Meaning: encounter, meet by chance
Example: In London, we unexpectedly ran across our friends Beth and Hugh.
- **run out of**
Meaning: use entirely
Example: She came home because she ran out of money.
- **run an errand**
Meaning: perform a task involving movement or travel
Example: I was late because I had to run errands.
- **run low**
Meaning: become scarce in quantity or supply
Example: As we crossed the desert, our water began to run low.
- **run up against**
Meaning: encounter unfavorably
Example: We ran up against a problem with the telephone company.

- **run for**
Meaning: campaign for
Example: Bill Clinton ran for governor successfully before he ran for President.
- **run along**
Meaning: go
Example: I've got to run along now.

Idioms Using "Take"

- **take a break**
Meaning: stop an activity briefly, rest
Example: I need to take a break between classes.
- **take care of**
Meaning: be responsible for, handle
Example: Does this office take care of financial problems?

Meaning: nurse, tend
Example: My mother always took care of me when I was sick.
- **take charge of**
Meaning: be responsible for, direct
Example: Sandra decided to take charge of the campaign.
- **take [something or someone] for granted**
Meaning: assume
Example: He took it for granted that I would have enough money to pay the bill.
- **take it easy**
Meaning: rest, relax
Example: Peter has decided to take it easy by not working as much.
- **take [something] out of**
Meaning: remove from
Example: My supervisor asked me to take all the old files out of the file cabinet.
- **take [someone] out**
Meaning: date [someone]
Example: The handsome stranger wants to take Judy out on Saturday night.
- **take up**
Meaning: begin an activity
Example: Would you like to take up a new hobby?

Meaning: use, consume
Example: I'm sorry to take up so much of your time.

- **take over**

Meaning: gain control of

Example: The angry workers took over the boss's office.

- **take [something] back**

Meaning: retract

Example: I take back all the nasty things I have ever said about you.