

Overview of Two-Part (Phrasal) Verbs (idioms)



LOOK UP



LOOK DOWN



LOOK AROUND



LOOK OUT

Many verbs in English are followed by an adverb or a preposition (also called a particle), and these two-part verbs, also called phrasal verbs, are different from verbs with helpers. The particle that follows the verb changes the meaning of the phrasal verb in idiomatic ways:

- **drop off** - decline gradually
The hill dropped off near the river
- **drop off(2)** - fall asleep
While doing his homework, he dropped off.
- **drop off(3)** - stop and give something to someone
Would you drop this off at the post office?
- **drop out** - cease to participate
After two laps, the runner dropped out.

Some particles can be separated from the verb so that a noun or pronoun can be inserted, and some particles can't be separated from the verb. In addition, some phrases are intransitive, meaning they cannot take a direct object.

- **Separable**
add up (meaning: to add)

Correct: She added up the total on her calculator.

Correct: She added it up on her calculator.

- **Inseparable**
get around (meaning: to evade)

Correct: She always gets around the rules.

Incorrect: She always gets the rules around (This construction makes no sense in English.)

- **Intransitive**
catch on (meaning: to understand)

Correct: After I explained the math problem, she began to catch on.

Incorrect: She began to catch on the math problem. (catch on cannot take a direct object in this meaning.)

Correct: She began to catch on to the math problem. (the word to makes the math problem an indirect object, which is acceptable in this meaning.)

Unfortunately, there is usually no indicator whether an idiomatic phrase is separable, inseparable, or intransitive. In most cases the phrases must simply be memorized. Below is a partial list of each kind of phrase.

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Separable Phrasal Verbs

add up add	back up cause to move backwards; support	blow up cause to explode; destroy by explosives	break down analyze; list the parts of separately
bring about cause to happen	bring off accomplish	bring on cause	
bring out publish; emphasize	bring over bring	bring to revive	
bring up raise; care for from childhood	brush out brush the inside of	burn down destroy by burning	
burn up consume by fire	buy out by the other person's share of a business	buy up buy the whole supply of	
call off cancel; order away	call up telephone; summon for military service	calm down become calm	

carry on
continue

cheer up
cause to become
cheerful

clean off
clean the surface of

clear out
clear the surface of

close up
close temporarily

count up
calculate; count; add
to a total

cut out
eliminate; delete

dress up
put clothes on; adorn

figure out
interpret; understand

fill out
complete (a printed
form)

fix up
repair; arrange in a
suitable manner

give out
distribute; announce

hand over
yield control of

have over
entertain someone
informally at one's

carry out
fulfill; complete;
accomplish; perform

chew up
chew thoroughly

clean out
clean the inside of

clear up
clear the inside of

count in
include

cross out
eliminate

cut down
reduce in quantity

dust out
dust the inside of

figure up
compute

fill up
fill completely (a
container)

get across
cause to be understood

give up
surrender something

hang up
suspend

hold off
delay; restrain

carry over
carry;
continue at
another time
or place

chop up
chop into
small pieces

clean up
clarify; tidy

close down
close
permanently

count out
exclude

cut off
interrupt;
sever;
amputate

draw up
write;
compose (a
document)

eat up
eat
completely

fill in
complete (a
printed form)

find out
discover

give back
return

hand down
deliver;
pronounce
formally;
leave as an
inheritance

have on
be dressed in

hold up
delay; rob;
threaten with

home		a weapon
keep up continue; keep the same pace	leave out omit	let down disappoint
let out release from confinement; make larger (in sewing)	light up light; illuminate thoroughly	live down live in such a way as to cause something to be forgotten
make over remake	move over move to the side	pass out distribute
pass up not take advantage of (as an opportunity)	pass on transmit	pay back repay
pay off discharge a debt completely; give someone his final pay	pick up come to meet an escort; lift with hands or fingers; learn casually; initiate an association publicly	play down minimize
play up emphasize	point out indicate	pull down pull in a downward direction; raze
push across cause to be understood or accepted	put off postpone	put on dress in; deceive or fool
put up preserve (food); receive as an overnight guest	quiet down be quiet	ring up the telephone
rinse off rinse the surface of	rinse out rinse the inside of	rule out eliminate
run down trace; disparage; hit with a vehicle	run off cause to depart; reproduce mechanically	save up accumulate
see through complete; in spite of difficulties	see off accompany someone to the beginning of a trip	send back send to a place where formerly located
send over	set up	show off

send to where
someone is

shut off
cause to cease
functioning

stand up
fail to keep an
appointment with

take down
remove from a high
position; write from
dictation

tear down
destroy

think over
consider

throw away
discard

tire out
cause to be exhausted

try out
test

wash off
wash the surface of

wind up
finish, tighten the
spring of a watch or
machine

work out
solve

write up
compose; prepare (a

arrange

slow up
cause to move more
slowly

sweep out
sweep the inside of

take in
understood; fool;
deceive; make smaller
(in sewing)

tear up
tear into small pieces

think through
consider from
beginning to end

throw over
reject

touch up
repair

turn down
refuse; lower the
volume

wash out
wash the inside of

wipe off
wipe the surface of

write down
record

exhibit
ostentatiously

spell out
enumerate;
state in detail

take back
return; retract
a statement

take over
take; assume
command of

tell off
scold;
reprimand

think up
create; invent

tie up
tie securely
or tight

try on
put on a
garment to
verify the fit

turn out
produce;
force into
exile,
extinguish (a
light)

wear out
use until no
longer
usable; tire
greatly

wipe out
wipe the
inside of;
decimate

write out
write down
every detail;
spell out

document)

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Inseparable Phrasal Verbs

back out of

desert; fail to keep a promise

bear up under

endure

call for

come to get; require

catch up with

cover the distance between oneself and

come along with

accompany; make progress

come out with

utter; produce

cut in on

interrupt

do without

deprive oneself of

face up to

acknowledge

fall out with

quarrel with

get around

evade; avoid

get down to

become serious about; consider

get on

enter (a vehicle); mount

go back on

desert; fail to keep (a promise)

bear down on

lean on; browbeat

break in on

interrupt

care for

like; guard; supervise; maintain

check up on

examine; verify

come by

find accidentally

come up with

utter; produce

disagree with

cause illness or discomfort to

drop in at/on

visit casually without planning

fall behind in

lag; not progress at required pace

fill in for

substitute for

get away with

do without being caught or punished

get in

enter (a vehicle)

get on with

proceed with

go for

like a great deal

bear on

have to do with

break into

interrupt

carry on with

continue

come across

find accidentally

come down with

become ill with

count on

rely on

do away with

abolish

drop out of

leave; quit

fall back on

use for emergency purpose

get ahead of

surpass; beat

get by with

manage with a minimum of effort

get off

descend from; leave

get through with

terminate, finish

go in for

be interested in; participate in

go on with
continue

go without
abstain from

hear of
learn about (sometimes
accidentally)

hold out against
resist

keep up with
maintain the pace of

live up to
maintain the standard
demanded of

look down on
feel superior to

make up for
compensate for

play up to
flatter for personal
advantage

run against
compete against in an
election

see about
consider; arrange

stand for
represent; permit

stick to
persist

talk back to
answer impolitely

touch on
mention briefly

wait up for
not go to bed while waiting
for

go over
review

hang around
remain idly in the vicinity of

hit on
discover accidentally

keep at
persevere at

lie down on
evade; fail to do

look after
take care of

look forward to
anticipate

pass on
transmit

put up with
tolerate

run away with
leave; escape from

see to
arrange; supervise

stand up for
support; demand

stick up for
support; defend

talk over
discuss

turn into
become

watch out for
be careful for

go with
harmonize with; look
pleasing together

hear from
receive a communication
from

hold on to
grasp tightly

keep to
persist in; continue

live on
support or sustain oneself
by means of

look back on
remember nostalgically

look up to
respect; admire

pick on
tease; bully

read up on
search out information on

run for
campaign for

settle on
decide on; choose

stand up to
resist

take after
resemble

tell on
report misbehavior to
authority

wait on
serve

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Intransitive Phrasal Verbs

back down

retreat from a position in an argument

bear up

endure

blow up

explode; lose one's temper

carry on

continue as before; misbehave

check up

investigate

clear out

leave

close up

close temporarily

come back

return

come over

come to someone's house, to where someone is

cut in

interrupt

die off/out

disappear; become extinct

drop in

visit someone casually without planning

fall behind

not progress at required pace

fill in

substitute

fly over

fly to where someone is

get around

circulate; move about

get in

enter

back out

desert; fail to keep a promise

blow in

drop in to visit unexpectedly

call up

telephone

catch on

understand

check out

leave; pay one's bill

clear up

become clear

came about

happen

come by

visit someone in his home

come through

succeed

die away

fade; diminish

dress up

don fancy or unusual clothes

drop out

abandon some organized activity; leave; quit

fall off

decrease; lose weight

find out

learn

get ahead

make progress

get away

escape

get off

descend from leave

back up

move backwards

blow over

pass without doing harm

calm down

become calm

catch up

cover the distance between oneself and a moving goal

cheer up

become cheerful

close down

close permanently

come along

accompany; make progress

come out

appear; make a social debut

come to

regain consciousness

die down

fade; diminish

drive back

return by car

drop over

visit someone casually

fall through

fail; not be accomplished

fly back

return by air

get along

have a friendly relationship

get by

manage; either just barely or with a minimum of effort

get on

enter (a vehicle); mount (a horse, etc.)

get on/along progress; be compatible	get up rise	get through finish
give out become exhausted	give up surrender; fail to finish	go back return
go off explode	go on happen; continue	go out stop burning; leave one's residence
go over go; succeed	grow up mature	hang around remain idly; dawdle
hang up replace a telephone receiver on its hook	hold on grasp tightly; persevere; wait while telephoning	hold out continue to resist; persevere; persist
keep on continue	keep up maintain the required pace or standard; continue	let up diminish in intensity
lie down recline	look on be a spectator	make out progress; succeed
make up become reconciled	move over move to the side	pan out turn out well; be successful
pass out become unconscious	pass on die	pick up grow; increase
pull in arrive	pull out depart	pull through survive (barely)
ride over ride to where someone is	run away escape; leave; leave quickly without permission	run down slowly lose power so as to stop functioning
run off depart running; drain	sell out sell the ownership or responsibility	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
stay over remain at someone's house overnight or longer	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	turn out succeed; come; appear, as at a public meeting
turn up arrive; be found	wait up remain awake in	wake up awaken

unexpectedly

walk back

return on foot to where one was

watch out

be careful

work out

be successful

anticipation

walk over

walk to where someone is

wear off

fade; disappear through use or time

wash out

fade or disappear from washing

wear out

become unusable through use; become used up