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Most commonly used phrasal verbs

Subscribe to the Blog You can radically improve your English fluency in a short time if you learn the most commonly used English phrasal verbs and start using them in your English conversations. And of course, the same applies on written communication! If you're able to use phrasal verbs in your e-mails, for example, they'll be much easier to read and understand! So without a further ado, let's get down to the business! Bring up – means to mention something. You can tell your colleague, for example: "They didn't bring up any of our suggestions in the meeting". Carry on – this phrasal verb is very similar to "go on". Just like "go on" it means "to continue" but it's usually used in phrases like "Let's carry on" or "You can carry on without me". Chase up – a very handy way of saying "to find, to seek out". For instance, you've been assigned a particular task, but some necessary files are missing. You can say "I'll chase up those files" meaning you'll go and see where those files are. You can also chase up a person – "I'll chase up Frank because I need his help with homework and no-one else has an idea how to do it!" Come across – to find something by chance or to encounter something unexpectedly. If you found an interesting article online and you're telling your friend about it, you can say: "You know, I came across this article online where they've done research on...". Come up with – this is a very useful phrasal verb if you usually find it hard to describe the fact when someone has told you about a new plan or a good idea. You might be struggling with phrases like – "He created a good plan" or "She produced a brand new solution" or even – "I devised a new idea on how to..." Native English speakers would simply say "She came up with a brand new solution" so you can start using this phrasal verb! Fall apart – describes when something falls into pieces. Let's say you're wrapping an awkward package and you're struggling with it. You can say "The whole thing just keeps falling apart, I can't wrap it; can you help me?" This is another phrasal verb foreigners don't normally use and if you start using it in similar occasions you'll find it much easier to describe the situation! Get along – means to have a good relationship with someone. You can say "Do you get along with Mary from the accounting?" if you want to ask that person if he/she is in good terms with Mary. Another sample sentence - "I don't get along with Mark, I didn't like him from the very first day I met him!" Get away with – means to avoid being punished for not having done something or for breaching rules. A typical phrase you can start using right away is "Did you think you can get away with this?" if you've caught someone having done something that's happened in your life and you can't stop thinking about it, you can say - "It's very hard for me to get over it." And if you want to lift someone's spirits and say that it's not such a big deal after all, you can say: "Common, get over it, it's not as bad as it looks!" Give up – use this phrasal verb when speaking about resolution you've stopped pursuing or expectations that are most likely to remain unfulfilled. "I gave up my New Year's diet; I just couldn't stick to it." "I've given up hope of getting a better job." Go on! – This is a typical way of telling someone to begin a particular action or resume doing something. If you can't wait on someone to start telling an interesting story, you'd exclaim in excitement – "Go on, go on!" You can also use "go on" if you, for instance, are waiting down figures your co-worker is calling out for you. Every time you're ready to put the next figure down you can use the phrasal verb "go on" to let your partner know that he can call out the next figure. Hold on! – Literally "hold on" means to hold on to something. Most common use of this phrasal verb, however, is when you want to tell someone to stop doing something or to wait until you're ready to proceed with the initial action. Foreigners usually use "Stop!" and "Wait!" instead; "hold on" is more natural in spoken English. Look after – means "to take care of" and is used a lot in communications between supervisors and employees at work. Typically your boss would ask you "Can you look after this order for me?" So if you want to sound more natural and friendly, don't say things like "I'm responsible for this customer". "I'm looking after this customer" is the best way of putting it. Look up – to find something in a phone book, on the Internet or any other reference media. This is a very handy phrasal verb to use in sentences like "Can you look up their address on the Net?" Make out – to recognize, to distinguish details of something. "I just couldn't make out what she was saying!" – you can say a phrase like this if the person in question spoke too fast, or with a distinct accent, or too quiet. Another sample sentence – "I can't make out these details; can you help me with this, please?" Pull over – if you drive a car, you can use this phrasal verb to describe an action of driving to the side of the road in order to stop. Typical application of this phrasal verb – "Can you pull over at the next petrol station?" Foreigners would most likely say "to stop at..." so if you start using "pull over" you'll sound more natural when speaking English! Put down – simply means "to write down." Hold on, I'll put it down, let me just find a piece of paper! Put off – this is an informal way of saying "to postpone", "to do later". "I don't want to clean my house today, I'll put it off till tomorrow" would be a perfect example of this phrasal verb in use. Turn up – means to arrive. You can inquire about your friend by asking "Has Michael turned up today?" if you haven't seen him and you're wondering if he's come to work or school today at all. Watch out! – you can use this phrasal verb if something endangers someone else's safety and you want to bring that person's attention to that object or activity. Foreigners usually use unarticulated sounds instead – like "Ahh!" or "Ouch!" simply because on occasions when a super-fast reaction is needed they can't think of a fitting word or phrase to say. Guest post from English learning enthusiast Robby Kukurs. Robby writes about improving spoken English on his blog EnglishHarmony.com. He also regularly posts videos about improving English fluency on his YouTube channel. In Categories Phrasal Verbs, Editor Picks Phrasal Verbs are one of the love to hate them areas of the English language, but love them or hate them, they are a vital area to understand before taking an exam. As you progress through levels of exams, especially Cambridge exams, you'll notice phrasal verbs coming up more and more often. At A2 you'll see useful phrasal verbs like wake up, by 11 you will start to see common phrasal verbs like find out, when you get to B2 you'll be expected to know less frequent phrasal verbs such as call off, and in C1 you'll be expected to not only understand, but to use a wide variety of essential phrasal verbs. These verbs have come from years of exams, classes, course books and students who have struggled with this language. The list is also available on Quizlet to use as self-study or to practise in class. PHRASAL VERBS QUIZLET CARDS Here are a few simple, but effective, activities to use with phrasal verbs in the classroom: Phrasal verb dictionary – The fact that phrasal verbs are lexicalised makes them perfect for a dictionary. Students will have to stretch their imaginations to draw the words separately or together. *Working in a socially distant or online classroom? No problem, use mini-whiteboards or online whiteboards to keep this essential classroom game alive. Phrasal verb taboo – Everyone's favourite taboo words are usually associated with phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs often have a latinate synonym or a phrase that explains the meaning. These synonyms come in handy when you later need phrasal verbs for an exam. Make your own transformations – Think of the solution sentence that uses a phrasal verb, then think of a synonymous sentence. Using the preposition as the key word, would you be able to recreate the key word transformation using the phrasal verb? Story time – Think of a story from your life and write it out using as many phrasal verbs as possible. Then test phrasal verb knowledge by cutting them out of the story and seeing if you can recreate it. True or false – Write 5 sentences about yourself using the phrasal verbs. Can others guess what is true and what is false? Just because phrasal verbs get you down, doesn't mean you shouldn't pick up your game. If you can use all of these verbs, consider yourself an expert. Here's the list: back down – stop demanding something / break down – stop working / break up – to end; to separate (a marriage / a relationship / etc.) bring up (a child) – raise (a child); bring into – to meet someone unexpectedly / call for – demand / request; call off – cancel (an event) / carry on – continue / catch on – to become popular (an idea or a style); to understand / cheer up – make happy / come across – find by chance / come into (money) – inherit / come round – come to your house / come up with (an idea) – think of and suggest an idea / come up – be mentioned, arise or appear (in class / an exam / a meeting) / count on – to rely on / cut down on – reduce the amount you consume / cut off – separate / isolate / interrupt / cut out – stop doing / eating something / do up – fasten, button up clothes; repair, redecorate or modernize a building or room / dress up – put on different clothes in order to disguise yourself / drop by – to visit informally or unexpectedly / drop off – to take something (or someone) to a place and leave it there / drop out – stop taking part in (a competition, a university, etc.) / end up – an end result of something planned or unplanned / fall for (someone) – fall in love with / fall out with (someone) – argue and stop being friendly with someone / find out – discover / follow up – find out more about something; take further action / get along with (someone) – have a good relationship with / get away with (for the weekend) – go away for a period of time for a break / get away with – not be punished for doing something / get by – manage to survive / live / get on with (someone) – have a good relationship with / get on with (something) – start or continue doing something (especially work) / get over (someone) – recover after the end of a relationship with someone / get over (something) – recover from / get together – meet (usually for social reasons) / get rid of – eliminate / give away (secrets) – reveal / give back – return / give in (homework) – submit / give in (to someone's request) – agree to something you do not want to give off (a smell) – produce and send into the air / give out (information) – announce or broadcast information / give out – distribute to a group of people / give up – to stop trying to do something (often because it is too difficult) / go along with – support an idea or agree with someone's opinion / go off – explode; become bad (food) / go on – to continue / have a romantic relationship with someone / go through with – complete a promise or plan / grow apart – get distant from someone, like a friend / grow up – slowly become an adult / hand in – submit school work, submit documentation / hand out – to distribute to a group of people, usually free / hang around – to wait or spend time somewhere, doing nothing / hang out – spend time relaxing (informal) / hang up – to hang clothes or an object on a hook or line; to end a phone call / head for – go towards / hold back – prevent someone from making progress / hurry up – do something more quickly / keep on – to continue / let down – disappoint / let off – give someone a lighter punishment than they expected (or not punish at all) / look after – take care of / look down on – feel superior to / look for – try to find / look forward to – feel happy about something that is going to happen / look into – investigate / look up – find information about (e.g. a word in a dictionary) / look up to – admire and respect / make up for – compensate for / make up with (someone) – become friends again / make up (something) – invent / make up stories / make up excuses / move on – change to a different job, activity or place / move out – stop living in a house or flat / pass out – lose consciousness / pay back – return money / pay off – finish paying for something; have a positive result from hard work / pick up – meet / collect someone (e.g. at the station / from school) / print out – to draw attention to something or someone / put away – put something back in the correct place / put off – postpone / put on (an event / a show) – organize an event / put on (clothes / make up) – place something on your body / put on (weight) – increase (weight) / put out – extinguish (e.g. fire) / put up (for the night) – accommodate / put up (your hand) – lift into the air / put up with – tolerate / rip off – charge someone too much for something / run into – meet by accident / run out of – use up (e.g. money, petrol, time) / set off – start a journey / set up – establish / start (e.g. a company) / show off – try to impress people by telling or showing them what you are capable of / shut down – to close / sort out – arrange or order by categories / find a solution / stand for – represent / stand out – be easy to see because of being different / take after (someone) – resemble a member of your family in appearance, behaviour or character / take off (something) – to remove from a surface or your body (clothes) / take on – attempt something new / employ / take over – take control / take to – start to like, especially after only a short time / take up – start doing (a hobby) / tell off – speak angrily to someone who has done something wrong / throw away – get rid of something you do not need any more / turn back – return towards the place you started from / turn down – reject or refuse / turn into – to transform / turn off – to disconnect (e.g. a computer) / turn on – to connect (e.g. the TV) / turn up – arrive, usually unexpectedly, early or late / use up – finish a supply of something / wear out – to use something until it becomes unusable / work out – think about and find a solution; 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