Phrasal verbs

Words such as in or on which are used as prepositions before noun phrases (1) can also be used as particles after verbs (2). We can also use other words such as away, back or out as particles (3). These verb + particle combinations (sleep in, go out) are called two-word verbs or phrasal verbs.

1 I usually drink coffee in the morning. • He said he left the keys on the table.
2 I slept in this morning and missed my bus. • He put on his boots and overcoat.
3 I tried to catch the dog, but it ran away. • When will she come back? • Did you go out last night?

Other phrasal verbs include: fall over, get through, go ahead, sit down, stand up, take off

Some phrasal verbs are used without an object (4) and others are used with an object. When the object is a noun phrase, we can usually put it before (5) or after the particle (6). When the object is a pronoun, we put it before the particle (7).

4 It's time to get up. • I wish these flies would go away. • Watch out! (NOT Watch out that!)
5 Don't turn on the light. You'll wake up the baby. • He took off his shoes.
6 Don't turn the light on. You'll wake the baby up. • He took his shoes off.
7 Don't turn it on. You'll wake him up. • He took them off. (NOT He took off them.)

After a phrasal verb we can also use a gerund (8) or a clause (9). We don’t usually put clauses or very long phrases between the verb and the particle.

8 Have you given up smoking? • They told us to carry on working. (NOT … to carry on work.)
9 Andy pointed out that we didn’t have enough time. • You should read over what you’ve written. (NOT You should read what you’ve written over.)

We can use phrasal verbs with prepositions. These combinations of verb + particle + preposition are sometimes called three-word verbs. We put pronouns after the prepositions.

10 This book is valuable and you should hold on to it. (NOT hold on it hold it on to) • Go ahead and I’ll catch up with you later. (NOT I’ll catch up you I’ll catch you up)

Others include: face up to, get round to, go along with, look forward to, watch out for

We often use phrasal verbs such as put off or leave out in informal situations (11) rather than other verbs with similar meanings such as postpone or omit which may sound more formal (12).

11 Let’s put the meeting off till next week. • Don’t leave out the author’s name.
12 We should postpone the meeting until next week. • You must not omit the author’s name.

15 Using a dictionary if necessary, rewrite these sentences in a more informal style, using appropriate forms of these phrasal verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cut back on</th>
<th>fill in</th>
<th>give up</th>
<th>go in</th>
<th>send back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>do away with</td>
<td>find out</td>
<td>go along with</td>
<td>go up</td>
<td>take off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 You should complete this form and return it with your payment.

You have to ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

2 My father has abandoned his attempt to get the university to abolish tuition fees.

My dad ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

3 It was necessary to reduce our spending after we discovered that our rent was increasing.

We had to ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

4 Please observe local customs at the temple and remove your shoes before entering.

Please ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
16 Complete this text with appropriate phrasal verbs using these verbs and particles.

*bend  breathe (×2)  go  lift  push  raise  stand  away  back  down  in  out  up (×3)*

When you have to spend a lot of time sitting at a desk, it is important to take short breaks and stretch your neck and back. You can use this exercise to help you stretch.

(1) __________ your chair __________ to the side and stand up, making sure there is some space in front of you. (2) __________ straight, with your arms hanging loosely by your side.

Breathe in deeply as you (3) __________ your arms __________ over your head. Pause a moment.

Then (4) __________ slowly as you swing your arms forward, letting them fall as you (5) __________ your whole body __________ until your hands are near your feet. Pause a moment.

Then, (6) __________ as you (7) __________ your body __________ very slowly, beginning with your hips, then your upper body, followed by your head and arms.

Repeat the exercise at least once before you (8) __________ to your desk again.

17 Choose A or B or both as appropriate sentences to use each time in creating this dialogue.

Ani: What’s the meaning of ‘reimburse’?

1 Raz: I don’t know. (A) Let’s look up it in the dictionary. (B) Let’s look it up in the dictionary.

2 Ani: (A) Hand over the dictionary and I’ll do it. (B) Hand it over the dictionary.

3 Raz: (A) I left behind it at home this morning. (B) I left it behind at home this morning.

4 (A) I think I put down beside my computer. (B) I think I put it down beside my computer.

Okay, so we can’t use a dictionary. What’s the context?

Ani: It says, ‘They reimbursed his tuition fees.’

5 Raz: (A) Maybe it means they worked out what his tuition was. 

(B) Maybe it means they worked what his tuition was out.

6 Ani: (A) But then it says he paid off some debts. (B) But then it says he paid off some.

7 Raz: (A) Maybe it means to pay back money to someone. 

(B) Maybe it means to pay money back to someone.

8 Ani: (A) So, they gave back him the money for his tuition. 

(B) So, they gave him back the money for his tuition.

Raz: Sounds good to me.