

91 Phrasal verbs



The Canadians are **falling behind** now but the Danish boat is just **keeping up with** the Slovaks. Can they **turn the race round** and win the gold medal?



1 Two-part phrasal verbs

A phrasal verb is a verb + adverb/preposition (e.g. *fill in*, *take off*):

Could you **fill in** this form and return it to us by post?

Don't **take your coat off** – we're going shopping now.

Phrasal verbs are similar to prepositional verbs, but the word order is sometimes different.

- In prepositional verbs, the preposition comes immediately after the verb and before the object: *She's **looking after** the children. She's **looking after** them.*
- In phrasal verbs, the adverb/preposition can come AFTER the noun object, and it ALWAYS comes after a pronoun object:

*Did you **look up** that word? Did you **look** that word **up**? Did you **look it up**?*

	VERB	+ NOUN OBJECT	+ PRONOUN OBJECT
prepositional verb	<i>work for (be employed by)</i>	<i>I work for Gerald Bryant & Sons. X I work Gerald Bryant & Sons for.</i>	<i>I work for them. X I work them for.</i>
	<i>take to (like)</i>	<i>I took to my teacher immediately. X I took my teacher to immediately.</i>	<i>I took to her. X I took her to.</i>
phrasal verb	<i>work out (solve)</i>	<i>I've worked out the solution. I've worked the solution out.</i>	<i>X I've worked out it. I've worked it out.</i>
	<i>take off (remove)</i>	<i>He took off his boots. He took his boots off.</i>	<i>X He took off them. He took them off.</i>

You can work out from a good dictionary whether a verb is prepositional or phrasal. Look at the position of the object (*sth*) in these dictionary entries:

take to sth to start to like someone or something.

Sandra took to it straight away. (prepositional)

take sth off to remove a piece of clothing.

He sat on the bed to take his boots off. (phrasal)

A lot of two-part phrasal verbs are intransitive – they don't have an object:

*Come in, we're almost ready. The plane **took off** nearly three hours late. (= left)*

We often use them in exclamations:

Look out! There's a car coming! Hurry up! The taxi's here. Go on, I'm listening.

⚠ We don't use an object with intransitive phrasal verbs: *X The plane took off the runway.*

2 Three-part phrasal verbs

There are also some phrasal verbs which have an adverb and a preposition (e.g. *look forward to*, *keep up with*, *cut down on*). We don't separate the parts of these verbs:

⚠ ✓ *I'm looking forward to my holiday.*

X I'm looking forward my holiday to. X I'm looking my holiday forward to.