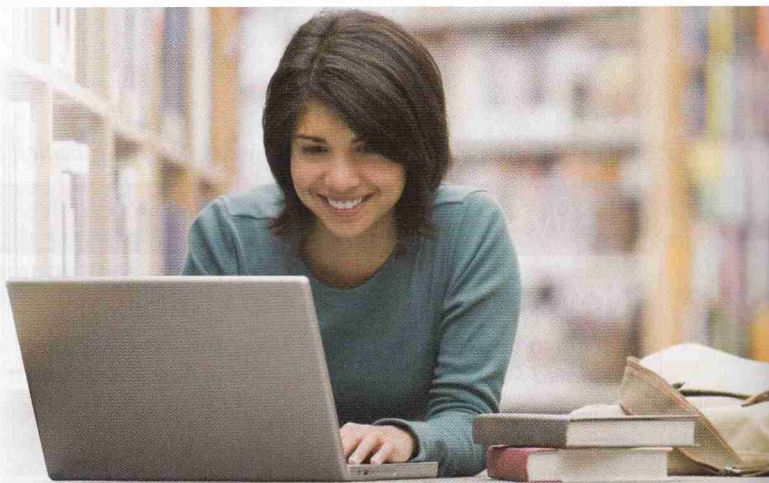


# 67 Phrasal verbs

In the old days, if somebody wanted to **look something up**, they'd open an encyclopaedia – now they just log on to the Internet.



## 1 Grammar of phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs consist of a verb plus a particle, usually an adverb. They can be transitive or intransitive. Intransitive phrasal verbs are sometimes used in imperatives:

**Watch out** – *that floor's not very safe.* **Come on!** *I can't wait all day!*

Some phrasal verbs have a transitive use with one meaning, and an intransitive use with a different meaning. Compare:

*The plane **took off** on time.* (*take off*, intransitive = become airborne)

*The man **took off** his coat.* (*take something off*, transitive = remove)

Note the correct word order in these sentence patterns:

transitive phrasal verb + noun object	✓ <i>I made that story up.</i> ✓ <i>I made up that story.</i>
transitive phrasal verb + pronoun object	✗ <i>I made up it.</i> ✓ <i>I made it up.</i>
transitive phrasal verb + adverb	✗ <i>I paid early back the loan.</i> ✗ <i>I paid back early the loan.</i> ✓ <i>I paid the loan back early.</i> ✓ <i>She never pays me back.</i>
transitive phrasal verb + relative pronoun	✗ <i>That's the room which up I did.</i> ✗ <i>That's the room up which I did.</i> ✓ <i>That's the room which I did up.</i>
transitive phrasal verb + passives	✗ <i>That story was made by a resentful employee up.</i> ✓ <i>That story was made up by a resentful employee.</i>

We can form nouns from some multi-word verbs (► Unit 70):

*The car **broke down** five kilometres from home.*

→ *The **breakdown** happened five kilometres from home.* (noun)

## 2 Meaning of phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs usually have a meaning which is different from the meaning of the parts:

*Are you **taking** a suitcase?* (*take* = carry)

*The power's **off**.* (*off* = not connected)

*After the argument, he **took off** without a word.* (*take off* = leave unexpectedly)

The same phrasal verb can have more than one meaning:

*That music's too loud. **Turn it down**.* (= reduce the volume)

*They offered her the job but she **turned it down**.* (= didn't accept the job)

In some cases it is possible to get an idea of the meaning of a multi-word verb from its particle, but note that these particles do not always have the meanings shown here:

<i>up</i>	completion/finality/maintaining sth	<i>give up break up eat up keep up</i>
<i>down</i>	collapse, movement downwards/writing	<i>fall down break down note down</i>
<i>out</i>	removal/thoroughness	<i>take out work out see out mark out</i>
<i>on</i>	starting/continuing/progressing	<i>turn on carry on take on get on</i>
<i>off</i>	stop connection/departure	<i>turn off break off set off</i>