



Two-Part (Phrasal) Verbs (Idioms)

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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. (For more about verbs with helpers, visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/eslverbau.html>.)

The particle that follows the verb changes the meaning of the phrasal verb in idiomatic ways:

VERB	MEANING	EXAMPLE
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 and 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. (<i>catch on</i> cannot take a direct object in this meaning.)
		Correct: She began to catch on to the math problem. (the word <i>to</i> makes <i>the math problem</i> 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.

Separable

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
break into - go into a house or room forcibly; suddenly; begin; 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
carry out - fulfill; complete; accomplish; perform
carry over - carry; continue at another time or place
cheer up - cause to become cheerful
chew up - chew thoroughly
chop up - chop into small pieces
clean off - clean the surface of
clean out - clean the inside of
clean up - clarify; tidy
clear out - clear the surface of
clear up - clear the inside of
close down - close permanently
close up - close temporarily
count in - include
count out - exclude
count up - calculate; count; add to a total
cross out - eliminate
cut off - interrupt; sever; amputate
cut out - eliminate; delete
cut down - reduce in quantity
draw up - write; compose (a document)
dress up - put clothes on; adorn
dust out - dust the inside of
eat up - eat completely
figure out - interpret; understand
figure up - compute
fill in - complete (a printed form)
fill out - complete (a printed form)
fill up - fill completely (a container)
find out - discover
fix up - repair; arrange in a suitable manner
get across - cause to be understood
give back - return
give out - distribute; announce
give up - surrender something
hand down - deliver; pronounce formally; leave as an inheritance
hand over - yield control of
hang up - suspend
have on - be dressed in
have over - entertain someone informally at one's home
hold off - delay; restrain
hold up - delay; rob; threaten with 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 - send to where someone is
set up - arrange
show off - exhibit ostentatiously
shut off - cause to cease functioning
slow up - cause to move more slowly
spell out - enumerate; state in detail
stand up - fail to keep an appointment with
sweep out - sweep the inside of
take back - return; retract a statement
take down - remove from a high position; write from dictation
take in - understood; fool; deceive; make smaller (in sewing)
take over - take; assume command of
tear down - destroy
tear up - tear into small pieces
tell off - scold; reprimand
think over - consider
think through - consider from beginning to end
think up - create; invent
throw away - discard
throw over - reject
tie up - tie securely or tight
tire out - cause to be exhausted
touch up - repair
try on - put on a garment to verify the fit
try out - test
turn down - refuse; lower the volume
turn out - produce; force into exile, extinguish (a light)
wash off - wash the surface of
wash out - wash the inside of
wear out - use until no longer usable; tire greatly
wind up - finish, tighten the spring of a watch or machine
wipe off - wipe the surface of
wipe out - wipe the inside of; decimate
work out - solve
write down - record
write out - write down every detail; spell out
write up - compose; prepare (a document)

Inseparable

back out of - desert; fail to keep a promise
bear down on - lean on; browbeat
bear on - have to do with
bear up under - endure

break in on - interrupt
break into - interrupt
call for - come to get; require
care for - like; guard; supervise; maintain
carry on with - continue
catch up with - cover the distance between oneself and
check up on - examine; verify
come across - find accidentally
come along with - accompany; make progress
come by - find accidentally
come down with - become ill with
come out with - utter; produce
come up with - utter; produce
count on - rely on
cut in on - interrupt
disagree with - cause illness or discomfort to
do away with - abolish
do without - deprive oneself of
drop in at/on - visit casually without planning
drop out of - leave; quit
face up to - acknowledge
fall behind in - lag; not progress at required pace
fall back on - use for emergency purpose
fall out with - quarrel with
fill in for - substitute for
get ahead of - surpass; beat
get around - evade; avoid
get away with - do without being caught or punished
get by with - manage with a minimum of effort
get down to - become serious about; consider
get in - enter (a vehicle)
get off - descend from; leave
get on - enter (a vehicle); mount
get on with - proceed with
get through with - terminate, finish
go back on - desert; fail to keep (a promise)
go for - like a great deal
go in for - be interested in; participate in
go on with - continue
go over - review
go with - harmonize with; look pleasing together
go without - abstain from
hang around - remain idly in the vicinity of
hear from - receive a communication from
hear of - learn about (sometimes accidentally)
hit on - discover accidentally
hold on to - grasp tightly
hold out against - resist
keep at - persevere at
keep to - persist in; continue
keep up with - maintain the pace of
lie down on - evade; fail to do
live on - support or sustain oneself by means of
live up to - maintain the standard demanded of
look after - take care of
look back on - remember nostalgically
look down on - feel superior to
look forward to - anticipate
look up to - respect; admire
make up for - compensate for
pass on - transmit
pick on - tease; bully
play up to - flatter for personal advantage
put up with - tolerate
read up on - search out information on
run against - compete against in an election
run away with - leave; escape from
run for - campaign for
see about - consider; arrange
see to - arrange; supervise
settle on - decide on; choose

stand for - represent; permit
stand up for - support; demand
stand up to - resist
stick to - persist
stick up for - support; defend
take after - resemble
talk back to - answer impolitely
talk over - discuss
tell on - report misbehavior to authority
touch on - mention briefly
turn into - become
wait on - serve
wait up for - not go to bed while waiting for
watch out for - be careful for

Intransitive

back down - retreat from a position in an argument
back out - desert; fail to keep a promise
back up - move backwards
bear up - endure
blow in - drop in to visit unexpectedly
blow over - pass without doing harm
blow up - explode; lose one's temper
call up - telephone
calm down - become calm
carry on - continue as before; misbehave
catch on - understand
catch up - cover the distance between oneself and a moving goal
check up - investigate
check out - leave; pay one's bill
cheer up - become cheerful
clear out - leave
clear up - become clear
close down - close permanently
close up - close temporarily
came about - happen
come along - accompany; make progress
come back - return
come by - visit someone in his home
come out - appear; make a social debut
come over - come to someone's house, to where someone is
come through - succeed
come to - regain consciousness
cut in - interrupt
die away - fade; diminish
die down - fade; diminish
die off/out - disappear; become extinct
dress up - don fancy or unusual clothes
drive back - return by car
drop in - visit someone casually without planning
drop out - abandon some organized activity; leave; quit
drop over - visit someone casually
fall behind - not progress at required pace
fall off - decrease; lose weight
fall through - fail; not be accomplished
fill in - substitute
find out - learn
fly back - return by air
fly over - fly to where someone is
get ahead - make progress
get along - have a friendly relationship
get around - circulate; move about
get away - escape
get by - manage; either just barely or with a minimum of effort
get in - enter
get off - descend from leave
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 unexpectedly
wait up - remain awake in anticipation
wake up - awaken
walk back - return on foot to where one was
walk over - walk to where someone is
wash out - fade or disappear from washing
watch out - be careful
wear off - fade; disappear through use or time
wear out - become unusable through use; become used up
work out - be successful

The following information must remain intact on every handout printed for distribution.

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