

Times/Chambers

**Dictionary
of
Phrasal
Verbs**

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Times/Chambers Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs

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Preface

Learning English presents difficulties both for those whose mother tongue it is and for those who learn it as a foreign language. The nature of these difficulties, as well as the scale of them, however, is different for each of these categories of learner. This is particularly true of phrasal verbs. The ability to use phrasal verbs correctly is almost instinctive in the native speaker, but non-native learners of English often find great difficulty in mastering the various meanings and constructions of such verbs.

It is important for non-native learners to learn how to use phrasal verbs correctly for they are very much used in everyday speech and in idiomatic expressions. Obviously learners of English as a foreign language must have mastered basic English vocabulary and grammar before tackling phrasal verbs. They will thus be at an intermediate stage of learning English.

Phrasal verbs consist of simple verbs such as *make*, *get*, *go*, *look*, *sit*, together with adverbs or prepositions, *eg on*, *up*, *out*. Although these look like phrases in that they are composed of more than one word, they often function like a single word, and frequently have a meaning not deducible from the literal meanings of the verb and the particle(s) of which the phrasal verb is composed, *eg put up with*.

Headwords and labels

The phrasal verbs in this dictionary are listed in alphabetical order. Each entry consists of a headword — the phrasal verb — in bold type followed by the grammatical label, *eg vt fus* or *vt sep* in italic type, followed by the definition in roman type, followed by an example in italics of how to use the phrase.

For reasons of space and convenience some phrasal verbs have been treated together in a single entry. Thus *aim to* and *aim at* appear as *aim to/at*. Differences in constructions are reflected in the examples.

Where a particular phrasal verb has more than one meaning the definitions have been clearly numbered to avoid confusion. Some phrasal verbs have a label, placed after the grammatical label, to indicate the context or situation in which they are usually used. For example, all the definitions of **buck up** are labelled (*inf*) since they commonly occur where the user is speaking or writing in an informal situation or context.

buck up 1 *vi (inf)* to hurry: *You'd better buck up if you want to catch the bus.* 2 *vi, vt sep (inf)* to cheer up: *The good news will buck her up. She bucked up when she heard the news.* 3 *vi, vt sep (inf)* to improve (one's attitude etc): *Buck up your ideas or you'll be out of a job.*

Similarly **allude to** has been labelled (*formal*) since it is commonly used only in formal contexts, and **go forth** has been labelled (*arch or liter*) since, although not common in modern English, it appears in archaic or literary English.

Sometimes opinions vary as to what constitutes a phrasal verb. In this dictionary constructions such as **apply for** have been labelled as phrasal verbs, and any words which may separate the verb from the preposition in such cases have been put in brackets, eg *You could apply (to the manager) for a job.*

Classification of verbs

One of the major problems which the non-native learner of English encounters when attempting to master phrasal verb constructions is knowing whether or not a particular phrasal verb can take an object, and if so, where to place the object in relation to the simple verb and the particle(s) of which the phrasal verb is composed. To assist the learner with this problem, all phrasal verbs have been labelled as transitive or intransitive in the way that verbs are usually classified in dictionaries.

Phrasal verbs labelled *vi* are phrases which function like intransitive verbs and so do not take a direct object.

get about *vi* 1 (of stories, rumours etc) to become well known: *I don't know how the story got about that she was leaving.* 2 to be able to move or travel about, often of people who have been ill: *She didn't get about much after her operation. Now that they have sold their car, they don't get about a lot.*

Phrasal verbs labelled *vt* are phrases which function like transitive verbs and so can take a direct object. Transitive phrasal verbs are further classified into *vt sep* — separable transitive verbs — or *vt fus* — fused transitive verbs. A separable phrasal verb, labelled *vt sep*, is one in which the words — ie the verb and adverb — that go together to make up the phrase may be separated from each other by the object where the object is a noun. Alternatively the object, if it is a noun, may be placed after the accompanying adverb. Thus it is permissible to say *She put aside her work* or *She put her work aside*.

If the object of a separable phrasal verb is not a noun but a pronoun, it must come between the verb and the adverb. This means that if you wish to use 'it' instead of 'her work' in the above example, then the sentence becomes *She put it aside* and not *She put aside it*.

A transitive phrasal verb which is obligatorily separated, labelled *vt oblig sep*, is one in which the object, whether it is a noun or a pronoun, must separate the verb from the adverb, as in *push around* meaning 'to treat roughly'. For example, *He pushes his young brother around* is the correct form for this sense of the verb.

A transitive phrasal verb which is usually separated, labelled *vt usually sep*, is one in which the object, if a noun, usually separates the verb from the adverb. Of course, where the object is a pronoun, it always separates the verb from the particle.

A fused transitive phrasal verb, labelled *vt fus*, is one in which the words that go together to make up the phrase are 'fused' together. In other words, the verb cannot be separated from the accompanying preposition by the object, whether it is a noun or a pronoun. For example, all four meanings of the phrasal verb *go with* in the following example are labelled *vt fus* because you cannot separate *go* from *with* by an object.

go with vt fus 1 to be given or sold with (something): *The carpets will go with the house.* 2 to look, taste etc well with (something): *The carpet goes with the wallpaper.* Whisky doesn't go very well with tea. 3 to be found in the same place as (something): *Illness often goes with poverty.* 4 to go steady with (someone): *I've been going with Mary for six months.*

Note that an adverb or an adverbial phrase describing the verb

may separate the verb and the preposition although the object may not separate them, eg *Whisky doesn't go very well with tea.*

Some fused transitive phrasal verbs are made up of more than two words, eg *put up with*. In this case the phrasal verb is made up of the verb *put*, the adverb *up*, and the preposition *with*. In phrasal verbs of this kind the adverb and the preposition may not be separated from each other by the object and they may not be separated from the verb by the object. For example, it is correct to say *I cannot put up with all this noise*, but incorrect to say *I cannot put up all this noise with* or *I cannot put all this noise up with*.

Position of labels

The labels are arranged in such a way to give specific information that will help learners to use the phrasal verbs correctly and in the right context. If a label applies to all of the meanings of a phrasal verb, the label comes before the numbering sequence begins, ie before the number 1:

catch on *vi (inf)* 1 to become popular. 2 to understand.

This indicates that both meanings of *catch on* are intransitive verbs and are informal.

If the label is placed immediately after one of the numbers in a definition, it indicates that the label applies only to the meaning immediately following:

get off 1 *vi, vt fus* to leave (a bus, train etc). 2 *vi (inf)* to leave (a place).

This indicates that the first meaning of *get off* is both an intransitive verb and a fused transitive verb, and the second meaning is an intransitive verb and is informal.

If there is a label after one of the numbers in a definition and there is also a label which comes before the whole numbering sequence, then both labels apply to the definition so labelled:

get at *vt fus* 1 to reach (a place, thing etc). 2 *(inf)* to suggest or imply (something). 3 *(inf)* to point out (a person's faults) or make fun of (a person).

This indicates that all the meanings of *get at* are fused transitive verbs, and only the second and third meanings are informal.

Definitions

For reasons of space the literal meanings of phrasal verbs have not usually been given in this dictionary. Thus the phrasal verb **get across** is given in its figurative sense, but not in the literal sense of *He got across the river* (= He succeeded in crossing the river).

get across *vi, vt usually sep (inf)* to be or make (something) understood: *This is something which rarely gets across to the general public. The plan seems quite clear to me, but I just can't get it across (to anyone else).*

Similarly the phrasal verb **get into** is given in its figurative senses, but not in its literal sense as used in *Please go into the room.*

go into *vt fus 1* to make a careful study (of something): *We'll need to go into this plan in more detail before we make any decision.* *2* to discuss or describe (something) in detail: *I don't want to go into the problems at the moment as there isn't any time before my next appointment.* *3* to begin to do (something) as a job: *My son hopes to go into politics.*

Learners wishing more information on the literal meanings of verbs, adverbs and prepositions will find these fully dealt with in **Chambers Universal Learners' Dictionary**.

Verb phrases

A few verb phrases consisting of verb plus object followed by preposition plus object have been listed in the dictionary (although they are not usually regarded as phrasal verbs) because it was felt that they would be useful for learners. They have been labelled simply as *vt* as in **apply to**: *apply force to a door* — and **build on** (definition 3): *I've built all my hopes on this book being published.* More verb constructions of this type can be found in **Chambers Universal Learners' Dictionary**.

This dictionary with its numerous examples showing how phrasal verbs are actually used will be invaluable to learners of English as a foreign language. It will not only help them to understand phrasal verbs but will give them the knowledge and confidence to use them.

Labels used in this Dictionary :

<i>Amer</i>	American
<i>arch</i>	archaic
<i>derog</i>	derogatory
<i>euph</i>	euphemistic
<i>facet</i>	facetious
<i>fig</i>	figurative
<i>formal</i>	—
<i>inf</i>	informal
<i>legal</i>	—
<i>liter</i>	literary
<i>mil</i>	military
<i>neg</i>	negative
<i>old</i>	—
<i>passive</i>	—
<i>sl</i>	slang
<i>v refl</i>	reflexive verb
<i>vt</i>	verb transitive
<i>vt fus</i>	verb transitive fused
<i>vt oblig sep</i>	verb transitive obligatorily separated
<i>vt sep</i>	verb transitive separable
<i>vt usually sep</i>	verb transitive usually separated
<i>vulg</i>	vulgar

A

abide by *vt fus* to act according to; to be faithful to: *They must abide by the rules of the game.*

abstain from *vt fus* not to do, take etc (something): *He abstained from voting in the election. (formal) He abstained from alcohol.*

accede to *vt fus (formal)* to agree to: *He acceded to my request.*

account for *vt fus* 1 to give a reason for; to explain: *I can account for the mistake.* 2 (formal) to settle or deal with successfully: *The army accounted for large numbers of the enemy.*

act as *vt fus* to do the work or duties of: *He acts as head of department when his boss is away. This sofa also acts as a bed.*

act for *vt fus* to do something for (someone else); to act as the representative of (someone): *She is acting for the headmaster in his absence.*

act on / (formal) upon *vt fus* 1 to do something following (the advice, instructions etc of someone): *I am acting on the advice of my lawyer. Have you acted on his instructions/suggestions?* 2 to have an effect on: *Certain acids act on metal.*

act up *vi (inf)* to behave or act badly or wrongly: *That child always acts up when his father is away. My car always acts up on a long journey. My injured leg is acting up again.*

add to *vt fus* to increase: *The news added to our happiness. His illness had added to their difficulties.*

add together / up *vt sep* to add and find the total of: *Add these figures together. He added up the column of figures.*

add up

add up *vi (inf)* to seem sensible or logical: *I don't understand his behaviour — it just doesn't add up.*

adhere to *vt fus 1 (formal)* to stick to: *This tape doesn't adhere to the floor very well.* 2 to remain loyal to: *I'm adhering to my principles.*

adjust to *vt fus* to change in order to become more suitable for or adapted to: *He soon adjusted to his new way of life.*

agree on / (formal) upon *vt fus 1* to discuss and come to the same decision about: *We agreed on a date for our next holiday.* 2 to have the same opinion as someone else about: *We may belong to different political parties, but there are some things we agree on.*

agree to *vt fus* to say that one will do or allow something: *He agreed to our request.*

agree with *vt fus 1* to think or say the same as: *I agreed with them that we should try again.* 2 to be good for the health etc of: *Cheese does not agree with me.* 3 (grammar) to be in the same tense, case, person etc as: *The verb must agree with its subject.*

aim at / for *vt fus* to point or direct something at; to try to hit or reach etc: *He aimed a blow at her head.* (fig) *He is aiming for the top of his profession.*

aim to / at *vt fus* to plan or intend: *He aims to finish the book next week. He aims at finishing the job tomorrow.*

alight on / (formal) upon *vt fus* to settle or land on: *The bird alighted on the fence.* (fig) *His eyes alighted on the letter.*

allow for *vt fus* to take into consideration when judging or deciding (especially a future possibility): *These figures allow for price rises. We must allow for an emergency.*

allude to *vt fus (formal)* to speak of indirectly or mention in passing: *He did not allude to the remarks made by the previous speaker.*

answer for *vt fus 1* to bear the responsibility or be responsible for (something): *I'll answer (to your mother) for your safety.* 2 to suffer or be punished for (something): *You'll answer for your rudeness one day.*

answer to *vt fus* to be the same as or correspond to (a description etc): *The police have found a man answering to that description.*

apply for *vt fus* to ask for (something) formally: *You could apply (to the manager) for a job. He applied for financial help.*

apply to 1 *vt* to use (something) for (some purpose): *to apply force to a door that will not open. He applied his knowledge of the country to planning their escape.* 2 *vt fus* to concern or be relevant to: *This rule does not apply to him.* 3 *vt fus* to ask for something formally from: *If you want a loan from the bank, you have to apply to the manager in writing.*

approve of *vt fus* to be pleased with or think well of (a person etc): *I approve of your decision.*

argue for/against *vt fus (formal)* to suggest reasons for or for not (doing something): *I argued for accepting the plan. He argued against Britain joining the EEC.*

arrive at *vt fus* to reach (a place etc): *We arrived at the station as the train was leaving. (fig) The committee failed to arrive at a decision. (fig) We both arrived at the same conclusion.*

ask after *vt fus* to make inquiries about the state of: *She asked after his father.*

ask for *vt fus* 1 to express a wish to see or speak to (someone): *When he telephoned he asked for you. He is very ill and keeps asking for his daughter.* 2 to behave as if inviting (something unpleasant): *Going out in cold weather without a coat is just asking for trouble. She asked for all she got.*

aspire to *vt fus (formal)* to try very hard to reach (something difficult, ambitious etc): *He aspired to the position of president.*

attend to *vt fus* to listen or give attention to: *Attend carefully to what the lecturer is saying!*

average out *vt sep* to work out the average result: *He averaged out his expenses at ten dollars per day. He averaged them out.*

average out at

average out at *vt fus* to result in as an average: *His car's petrol consumption averaged out at ten litres a week.*

B

back down *vi* to give up one's opinion, claim, etc: *She backed down in the face of strong opposition.*

back out 1 *vi, vt sep* to move out backwards: *He opened the garage door and backed (his car) out.* 2 *vi* to withdraw from a promise etc: *You promised to help — you mustn't back out now!*

back up *vt sep* to support or encourage: *The new evidence backed up my arguments. Her husband never seems to back her up.*

bail out *vt sep* to set (a person) free by giving money to a court of law: *They won't allow you to bail out someone accused of murder.*

bale out 1 *vi* to parachute from a plane in an emergency. 2 *vi, vt sep* to clear water out of a boat: *We shall have to bale (the water/boat) out.*

bank on *vt fus (inf)* to rely on: *I'm banking on his help to run the disco. Don't bank on me — I'll probably be late.*

bargain for *vt fus (often in neg)* to expect or take into consideration: *I didn't bargain for everyone arriving at once. He got much more than he bargained for when he started arguing with her.*

bash in *vt sep (inf)* to beat or smash: *The soldiers bashed in the door.*

bash on *vi (sl)* to go on doing something especially in a careless or inattentive way: *In spite of his father's advice he bashed on (with the painting).*

bear out *vt sep (formal)* to support or confirm: *This bears out what you said. If you put in a complaint about him, I will bear you out.*

bear with *vt fus (formal)* to be patient with (someone):

Bear with me for a minute, and you'll see what I mean.
beat down 1 *vi* (of the sun) to give out great heat: *The sun's rays beat down on us in the desert.* 2 *vt sep* to reduce (the price of something) by bargaining: *We managed to beat the price down by \$5.* 3 *vt sep* to force (a person) to lower a price: *We tried to beat him down but we had to pay the full price in the end.*

beat off *vt sep* to succeed in overcoming or preventing: *The old man beat off the youths who attacked him. He beat the attack off easily.*

beat up *vt sep* to punch, kick or hit (a person) severely and repeatedly: *They beat my brother up and left him for dead. He beat up an old lady.*

believe in *vt fus* 1 to accept the existence of (something) as a fact: *Do you believe in ghosts?* 2 to recognize the value or advantage of (something): *Some doctors believe in a low-fat diet. He believes in capital punishment.* 3 to have faith in the ability *etc* of (someone): *He will achieve his ambition — he really believes in himself.*

belong in *vt fus* to have as its correct place: *These shoes belong in the cupboard.*

belong to *vt fus* 1 to be the property of: *The book belongs to me. The furniture belongs to my mother.* 2 to be a native, member *etc* of: *I belong to Glasgow. Singapore belongs to the ASEAN.*

belong with *vt fus* to go along or together with: *This page belongs with all the others. This shoe belongs with that shoe.*

bestow on/upon *vt (formal)* to give (especially a title, award *etc*) to (someone): *The Queen bestowed a knighthood on him.*

beware of *vt fus* to be careful of: *Beware of the dog. Beware of thieves.*

blare out *vi, vt sep* to sound loudly and often harshly: *The radio was blaring out (pop music) constantly.*

blast off *vi* (of rockets, spacecraft *etc*) to take off and start to rise.

blast out

blast out *vi, vt sep* to come or be sent out, very loudly:

Music (was being) blasted out from the radio.

blot out *vt sep* 1 to hide from sight: *The rain blotted out the view.* 2 to conceal or remove from memory: *I've blotted out all memory of that terrible day.*

blow out *vt sep* to extinguish or put out (a flame etc) by blowing: *The wind blew out the candle. The child blew out the match.*

blow up 1 *vi, vt sep* to break into pieces, or be broken into pieces, by an explosion: *The bridge blew up. The soldiers blew the factory up.* 2 *vt sep* to fill with air or a gas: *He blew up the balloon. He blew the tyre up with difficulty.* 3 *vi (inf)* to lose one's temper: *If he says that again I'll blow up.* 4 *vt sep* to enlarge (a photograph etc). 5 *vt sep (sl)* to scold or speak to (someone) angrily: *She blew me up for arriving late.*

blurt out *vt sep* to say (something) suddenly or without thinking of the effect or result: *He blurted out the whole story.*

book in 1 *vi* to sign one's name on the list of guests at a hotel etc: *We have booked in at the Royal Hotel.* 2 *vt sep* to reserve a place for (someone) in a hotel etc: *My aunt is coming to stay so I've booked her in at the nearest hotel*

boom out *vi* to make a hollow sound, like a large drum or gun: *His voice boomed out over the loudspeaker.*

bottle up *vt sep* to prevent (eg one's feelings) from becoming known or obvious: *Don't bottle up your anger — tell him what's annoying you.*

break away *vi* to escape from control: *The dog broke away from its owner. (fig) Several of the states broke away and became independent.*

break down 1 *vt sep* to use force on (a door etc) to cause it to open, sometimes resulting in breaking it: *We had to break the door down because we lost the key.* 2 *vi* to stop working properly: *My car has broken down.* 3 *vi* to fail; to be unsuccessful and so come to an end: *The talks have broken down.* 4 *vi* to be overcome with

emotion: *She broke down and wept.* 5 *vt sep* to divide into parts: *The results can be broken down in several ways. The chemist has broken the compound down into its parts.*

break in(to) *vi, vt fus* 1 to enter (a house etc) by force or unexpectedly: *When the burglar broke in he was bitten by my dog. Someone tried to break into the house.* 2 to interrupt (someone's conversation etc): *He broke in with a rude remark. He broke into our conversation.*

break into *vt fus* to begin (something) suddenly: *He broke into song (= began singing). His face broke into a smile.*

break off *vi, vt sep* 1 to stop: *He broke off communications with his family. She broke off in the middle of a sentence. They broke the engagement off yesterday.* 2 to (cause to) come off by breaking: *I've broken the handle off. The handle has broken off.*

break out *vi* 1 to appear or happen suddenly: *War has broken out.* 2 to escape (from prison, restrictions etc): *A prisoner has broken out.* 3 to become suddenly covered (in a rash etc): *Her face has broken out in a rash.*

break up 1 *vi, vt sep* to divide or break into pieces: *The sheet of ice is breaking up. He broke the old furniture up and sold the wood. (fig) The policeman broke up the crowd. (fig) John and Mary broke up (= separated from each other) last week. (fig) Their marriage has broken up.* 2 *vi* to finish or end: *The meeting broke up at 4.40. The schools break up for the holidays soon.*

break with *vt fus* 1 to quarrel with and therefore stop being connected with: *He broke with the Labour Party in 1968. He broke with it some time ago.* 2 to depart from; to cease to follow: *He broke with tradition and married a girl of a different race.*

breathe in, out 1 *vi* to cause air to enter or leave the lungs by breathing: *He couldn't breathe in until he reached the surface.* 2 *vt sep* to cause (a gas, particles of dust etc) to enter or leave the lungs by breathing: *The workers had breathed in large quantities of poison gas.*

brick up *vt sep* 1 to close (a hole etc) with bricks: *They*

brim over

bricked up the fireplace. They bricked it up yesterday.

2 to imprison (a person) behind a wall of bricks: *She was bricked up alive and died a horrible death.*

brim over vi to overflow: *The cup is brimming over with water. (fig) She is brimming over with excitement.*

bring about vt sep to cause: *His disregard for danger brought about his death. What brought it about?*

bring back vt sep to (cause to) return: *May I borrow your pen? I'll bring it back tomorrow. The government may bring back capital punishment. Her singing brings back memories of my mother. That brings it all back to me (= reminds me of it).*

bring down vt sep to cause to fall: *The storm brought all the trees down. (fig) That will bring down the dictator.*

bring forth vt sep (formal) to give birth to or produce.

bring forward vt sep 1 (formal: also put forward) to bring to people's attention; to cause to be discussed etc: *They will consider the suggestions which you have brought/put forward. If you want us to consider your proposal bring it forward at the next meeting.* **2 to cause to happen at an earlier date; to advance in time:** *They have brought forward the date of their wedding. They have brought it forward by one week.*

bring in vt sep 1 to introduce: *They will bring in a parliamentary bill.* **2 to produce as profit:** *His books are bringing in thousands of dollars.* **3 (of a jury) to pronounce or give (a verdict):** *They brought in a verdict of guilty.*

bring off vt sep (inf) to achieve (something attempted): *I never thought they'd bring it off! They brought off an unexpected victory.*

bring on vt sep 1 to cause to come on: *Bring on the dancing girls!* **2 to help to develop:** *His illness was brought on by not eating enough.*

bring out vt sep 1 to make clear; to reveal: *He brought out the weaknesses of her theory.* **2 to publish:** *He brings a new book out every year.*

bring round vt usually sep 1 to bring back from uncon-