

Phrasal verbs in conversation

Add up

Barge in Carry on

raw out Explain aw

Fall through Give

and down Iron out

keep on Last out M

n up Pass away Ru

Set off Take a

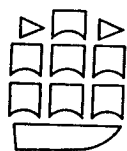
Use up

Water down W

Colin Mortimer

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TO MY MOTHER

During the academic year 1966-7, I had the good fortune to study for a year in the Departments of English Language and Phonetics in the University of Leeds. I should like to acknowledge my debt to the staffs of those departments, and to hope that, with all its imperfections, this little book will be accepted by them as a modest but serious attempt to manifest some of what I was taught at Leeds about language in general and about phrasal verbs and collocation in particular.

I should like also to record, with thanks, my debt to the British Council's English Language Teaching Institute, in London, which has been a constant and unique source of inspiration, practical, expert guidance, and invaluable experience.

Lastly, I wish to express my gratitude to my wife for her shrewd, constructive comments on individual dialogues, and to her and my two children for having surrendered so cheerfully, while the book was being written, so much time that was rightfully theirs.

Introduction

This book of 432 conversations is intended for upper intermediate and advanced students of English as a second or foreign language. It is also suitable for private study, and as a reference work for teachers. It can be used intensively or extensively as a component of a course, or as supplementary practice material.

Aims

- 1 To contextualize individual meanings of a large number of phrasal verbs in such a way that these meanings will be remembered. Each conversation attempts to present a dramatic and developing situation with economy of words, and with some attention to compelling rhythmical and stylistic patterning. The situations are fairly adult and are based particularly on the workings of human nature – a powerful source of motivation in language learning that has often been left untapped in language teaching materials.
- 2 To supply groups of words that regularly accompany particular phrasal verbs and that should be learnt in company with them. These groups of words help to limit and define the meaning of a verb.
- 3 To give practice in the use of phrasal verbs in context, and with appropriate lexical company.
- 4 To serve as a complement to a dictionary of phrasal verbs or to the definitions of phrasal verbs entered in conventional dictionaries.
- 5 To act as a source of comprehension, interpretation and composition work. Some of this work will arise from the implicatory nature of many of the dialogues. These leave something significantly *unsaid* in order that something still remains to be said by the student – who, it is hoped, will then feel impelled to make explicit, in speech or writing, what is only implicit in the text.
- 6 To simulate some of the characteristics of spoken, as opposed to written English, and to give practice in the use of the spoken form.
- 7 To provide material for acting purposes.

A NOTE ON PHRASAL VERBS

The English Language has hundreds of two part verbs such as 'bring up', 'carry on' and 'put up'. These are easy enough to understand when the meaning of the whole two part verb is equal to the meaning of the sum of its two parts: we can understand what 'bring up a table' means, provided we know the meaning of 'bring' and the meaning of 'up'.

But in many cases knowing the meaning of the parts does not help us to know the meaning of the whole. Thus, to add the meaning of 'bring' to the meaning of 'up' will not help us to understand the meaning of 'bring up' in the expression 'He brought up a point'. Nor will it help us to understand 'bring up' in the expression 'She brought up a family'.

These uses of 'bring up' are *idiomatic*. To understand their meanings, we may, perhaps, need dictionary definitions; but above all we need to meet the verbs, and remember them, in the kind of context in which they are used, and in which we might ourselves use them. And we need to learn the groups of words that regularly accompany particular verbs. Thus, 'bring up', as in 'bring up a point', is also often accompanied by 'question', or 'issue', or 'matter'. On the other hand, 'bring up', as in 'bring up a family', can be accompanied by 'child', 'son', 'grandson', 'orphan', etc. **1**

We could say that in the paragraph above, we have two meanings of the single verb 'bring up'. But in this book it is suggested that it is more useful to *think of each separate meaning as a separate verb*, which is to be considered separately, learnt separately in one's mind, along with the situation in which it is met, and the lexical company it regularly keeps.

Thus, it is useful to think of 'blow up' in 'blow up a bridge' as one verb, 'blow up' in 'blow up a balloon' as a second verb, 'blow up' in 'blow up with anger' as a third verb, 'blow up' in 'the storm blew up' as a fourth verb, and 'blow up' in 'blow up a photograph' as a fifth verb – each of these to be learnt separately.

Each of the conversations in this book is devoted to one separate meaning of one phrasal verb. Each of the verbs is idiomatic (though some are less idiomatic than others), and each is an adverbially particled verb. Thus, even though 'go through' as in 'go through an experience' is idiomatic, it is not met in this book, because it is prepositionally particled. Such idiomatic verbs are often called 'prepositional verbs' to distinguish them from phrasal verbs – which are adverbially particled idiomatic verbs.

We can sometimes tell whether a transitive verb is a phrasal verb or whether it is a prepositional verb by the position the pronoun takes. Thus we can 'bring up a point' and we can 'bring it up'; but when we 'go through an experience', we 'go through it', we do not 'go it through'.

Also, the adverbial particle in a phrasal verb is often separable, but the prepositional particle in a prepositional verb is not separable. We can 'bring up a point' and we can 'bring a point up'; but though we can 'go through an experience', we cannot 'go an experience through'.

Intransitive two part idiomatic verbs – 'blow over', for example – are, of course, phrasal verbs, and many of these are included in the book.

Most of the verbs used in this collection have been selected because most of their meanings are frequently encountered. Some, such as 'blow up' as in 'blow up a photograph', have been chosen because they are beginning to be widely used and will almost certainly be used increasingly.

Phrasal verbs are *used* a great deal, especially in spoken English. So it is important for a student to recognise their meaning at least. If he wants to learn to speak English naturally and well, however, he must try to use these verbs himself – *once he understands them properly*. It is possible to use few of these verbs in one's speech; but then one is likely to sound rather formal, and possibly a bit pompous – 'enter' for instance, is a rather more momentous verb than 'come in', and is not always appropriate to the same occasions.

The verbs in this book are arranged in alphabetical order so that, if he so chooses, the student can use the book as a complement to, or amplification of, the dictionary.

THE CONVERSATIONS

The more the conversations are used and discussed *as conversations*, and as a source of comprehension and composition work, the more effectively will they fix in the mind of the student the meaning and use of the particular verbs on which they focus.

Each conversation should first be tackled as a whole. It can either be presented as a prepared reading or performance by the teacher and one of the

best pupils (perhaps twice, or even three times), or it can be treated as a reading comprehension. After general questions such as 'What's it about?' have been answered, the conversation can be gone through more carefully, more detailed questions on content can be asked, and new constructions and vocabulary can be dealt with.

Most of the conversations thrust one into a situation in the very first line. Many of them suggest that something has happened before the dialogue begins, and at the end they often imply what will happen afterwards. As well as answering straightforward comprehension questions, the student can speculate about what happened before, what is implied during, and what will transpire after the conversation. He can also decide who the speakers are, discuss their characters, and suggest what their relationship to each other is. He can try to relate the situation presented in the dialogue to his own experience. For example, in the first conversation the student can say whether he or she has ever been embarrassed in a restaurant or other public place by a companion, and if so how and where, and what the outcome was.

It may be that the student will not always be able to express accurately in English the implications that he has apprehended *through* English. If his English is good enough to give him the insights, but not sufficiently developed for him to express these insights, then he can use the mother tongue first, and the appropriate interpretative English can be arrived at by intelligent stages.

One of the important features of this book is the attempt made to simulate the constructions, repetitions, interruptions and hesitations used in spoken English. Hesitations often merit interpretation; interruptions result in unfinished sentences – and it is useful for the student to supply the words that would have been uttered had there been no interruption. For example, in 'Put off (v)', the speaker interrupts *himself*: 'He's a fool and he's a nuisance, and what's more, he's a . . . Ah, Mr Pratt!'

The dialogues can be repeated aloud, first in chorus, or in two groups, and then in pairs. Then they can be acted at the front of the class either with book in hand, or from memory. Many of them lend themselves even to public performance. Selections can be presented in quick succession as a means of displaying the prowess in English of a whole class.

Memorizing the dialogues is a useful exercise, but it is important, also, in the later stages, to give the student an opportunity to 'free' the language in the dialogue and to use it in a consonant, normalized situation arising from his own experience.

As the process of reading, listening, comprehension, discussion, explanation, performance and composition goes on, the relevant phrasal verb is used many times and, directly and indirectly, its formal features are dealt with. One's hope is that during the process, meaning has been 'rememberably' imparted.

THE DRILLS

After each conversation there is a drill which quotes from the conversation one or two lines involving the use of the phrasal verb that is featured. These lines should be drilled first in chorus, then in groups and then in pairs, for pronunciation practice, and to fix the idiom. In some of the quotations, the particle is included in brackets in two positions to indicate that two

versions of the sentence are possible.

For example: He hasn't added up this bill correctly.

He hasn't added this bill up correctly.

It should be noted, however, that though the particle *can* often be used in two positions, this does not mean that, in natural speech, it always *is* used equally often in the two positions, or that to use it in one rather than the other position does not sometimes cause a slight shift in meaning or emphasis. Until more research has been done into the subject, experience must be our guide here.

When the quoted lines have been drilled, they can be varied by referring to the substitution columns below them. Selected words or phrases in the quotations are in bold type to indicate that the items listed below them can be put in their place:

e.g. I'm going to break (up) the **furniture** (up)

chairs

table

bed

It should be noted that the use of bold type is in no way an indication of stress, and is only used to show that substitutions are possible. Sometimes an item in the quotation – such as a proper name or a number – is printed in bold type even though no substitution list appears below it. In these cases the student is invited to supply his own substitutions – e.g. for John, the names of other people in the class.

When a sentence quoted from a dialogue is varied by reference to the substitution lists, the new sentence produced will retain the *meaning* of the phrasal verb as used in the dialogue on which it is based; it will not, however, always necessarily reflect the actual *situation* presented in the dialogue.

The following are some of the sentences that can be constructed from the drill and lists that accompanies 'Break up (i)':

A What do you intend doing with that hammer?

B I'm going to break up the table.

A I see.

A What are you thinking of doing with that chopper?

B I'm going to break the bed up.

A I see.

A What do you intend to do with that axe?

B I'm going to break up the chairs.

A I see.

It is suggested that such a phrase as 'I see' is not only conclusive and useful, but also satisfying to say, and it acts here as a constant in a varying sequence, rather like a refrain in song or verse. Rhythmical and stylistic patterning is probably far more relevant to learnability than, perhaps, writing for language teaching purposes has so far taken into account.

THE TAPES

The book is accompanied by three tapes on which 124 dialogues are recorded. The conversations are spoken at normal speed: they have not been

said in the especially deliberate style that is often employed in tapes for teaching purposes. While there may be a slight loss in clarity, there is a considerable gain in naturalness. Appropriate hesitations, repetitions and interruptions are included.

These tapes are an extensive source of listening and pronunciation practice. But they are also much more than this. They are not mere 'readings aloud' of the written texts, but are also *interpretations* of them. As such they add a dimension of meaning to the texts. Thus, for instance, in 'Buy over', the speaker's tone on the phrase 'You get them for nothing' suggests, perhaps, not only worldliness, but in addition an element of world weariness. In 'Lock up', A's tone on 'Goodnight' indicates perhaps that having said 'Good night' to her on many previous occasions, it is only at this particular moment that he has actually noticed her. In 'Break up (i)' there is a pause before the phrase 'I see'. The student should interpret this pause in terms of the bewilderment the speaker must have experienced before he said 'I see'. 'I see' also occurs in 'Make up (iv)'. In this conversation, it probably means that the speaker, having seen an example of Mr Ross's work, has no intention of ever having a suit made by him. It also indicates the speaker's opinion of B's judgement and taste.

In their quest for stylistic and rhythmical, as well as human interest, and in seeking to include an interpretable component, these conversations attempt to make some contribution in that area where language for teaching purposes and the language of literature can and should meet.

It is suggested that each conversation should be listened to as a whole – once, twice, or several times, with or without the text. Then questions of a general nature can be asked about it. Next, the tape can be played through a speech at a time for more specific comprehension questions. After this, the conversation can be played once more, and pauses can be made (using the pause device on the tape recorder) for repetition in chorus, in groups, and individually.

For example: William, I know we've been extravagant (pause), but please don't spoil our anniversary (pause), etc.

If necessary, the extracts can be repeated: dextrous and accurate rewinding comes quickly with practice.

Sometimes it is a good idea to read the written text first and decide on one's own interpretation of the characters and situation before listening to the taped version. And sometimes it is interesting and productive to present a tape without the text and to stop it after each speech, or even a part of a speech, so that, if the text has not been seen at all, the student can try to predict what the next speech, and, ultimately, the outcome of the whole conversation is going to be.

After each recorded dialogue, the quotations used in the drill are recorded, with a pause for repetition. When these lines have been repeated a few times, it is hoped that the tunes of these sentences will be retained in the student's mind as a guide to the stress and intonation of the further sentences that he makes up with the help of the substitution items.

The pauses on the tape for repetition purposes are only very slightly longer than the utterances that are to be repeated. This quick 'pacing' is intentional: a short pause indicates the time in which the utterance can and should be said by the advanced student, unless his delivery in his own language is rather slow;

it also helps a student gradually to get the feel of the rhythm of English and to repeat with the correct rhythm. Too much time to consider is, perhaps, inimical to good rhythm. On the other hand it is appreciated that some students may be discouraged or made nervous by too short a pause, or find it demands too much of them at their present level of attainment in pronunciation. The answer to this difficulty lies in the pause key, or button, or lever, which practically all tape recorders have. By pressing the pause key after a sentence, one can extend the pause for repetition for as long as one likes. One can *extend* a pause, but unfortunately one cannot *shorten* a pause so easily. A long pause breaks up the rhythm of the tape, and many students are bored by longer pauses – they lose the feeling of being impelled into the kind of repetition that gives a sense of participation.

The pauses on the tape, then, have been made intentionally short in the knowledge that a properly controlled pause key can make them just as long as one likes.

Many of the conversations on the tape do, of course, lend themselves to extended development in the language laboratory: listen and repeat, role playing, pattern drills, transformation drills, etc.

Dialogues that have been recorded on the three tapes that accompany the text are asterisked * in the text.

Some of the dialogues are spoken with a slightly regionalized pronunciation, where such a pronunciation seems to be appropriate. Dialogues which have been recorded with this slightly non-standard pronunciation are marked **. In these cases the taped version of the dialogue is perhaps more for interpretation and listening purposes than for imitation. Even so, imitating a non-standard pronunciation is good practice occasionally, provided that one realizes what one is doing.

add up*

- A. William, I know we've been extravagant. But please don't spoil our anniversary. Don't add up the bill in that ostentatious manner – people will stare.
- B. But he's added it up wrongly!
- A. Oh, William! Are you sure you've checked it carefully?
- B. Waiter, you haven't added this bill up correctly!
- A. He hasn't heard you. Promise not to make a scene, William, please!
- B. Waiter! Waiter!!
- A. Oh, William!
- B. I say! Waiter!!

- (b) He hasn't added (up) this bill (up) correctly.
these columns properly
figures
totals
items
- (a) Are you sure you've checked it carefully?
them

ask out

- A. Shall I ask Susan out to the theatre?
- B. She doesn't like the theatre.
- A. Shall I ask her out to a restaurant?
- B. She doesn't like restaurants.
- A. Shall I ask her out to the cinema?
- B. She doesn't like films.
- A. I see! Well, shall I ask her out to . . .
- B. And she doesn't like you.

- (a) Shall I ask Susan out to the theatre?
a restaurant
the cinema
a dance
celebrate
- (b) She doesn't like the theatre.
enjoy restaurants
films
dancing
celebrating

back up*

- A. *I know I'm the right man for the job; and I realize I have the best claim to the job. But I shan't get it without someone to back me up.*
B. *Won't Johnson back up your claim? Surely he'll back you up?*
A. *Why should he? Johnson wants the job himself.*

- (a) I shan't get the **job** **without** **someone** to back me up.
 post unless I have somebody
 appointment if I haven't
 part
 contract
 commission
(b) Won't **Johnson** back you up?

barge in

- A. *You weren't invited! Nobody asked you to come! They were all behaving themselves until you came barging in!*
B. *Barging in?*
A. *You'd no right to barge in!*
B. *I'd every right – it's my flat, isn't it?*

- (a) They were all **behaving themselves** until you came barging in!
 enjoying themselves
 perfectly happy
 contented
 well-behaved
 quiet

- (b) Barging in?

- (a) You'd no **right** **to barge in!**
 reason
 excuse for barging in

bear out

- A. I wouldn't have believed the story myself until a week ago. But this evidence of yours bears out another report I've had.
- B. Well, 'there's no smoke without fire' – as the proverb says!
- A. And I'm afraid the rumour's borne out further by this tape-recording – listen.

(a) This **evidence** of yours bears out another **report** I've had.

information

got

testimony

received

news

rumour

heard

story

(b) Well, 'there's no smoke without fire'!

(a) And the report's borne out further by this **tape-recording** – listen.

photograph look

photostat

letter

document see

file

dossier

bear up*

- A. You know, there's absolutely no need to be depressed. Do try to bear up, please!
- B. That's what they all say: 'Try to bear up,' they say, 'try to bear up'!
- A. Well, please, won't you just try?
- B. But I have tried! Of course I've tried! And I know I've no good reason to feel depressed. But I am depressed, and that's all there is to it! So please, everybody, do stop telling me to bear up – it only makes matters worse.

(a) **You know**, there's absolutely no **need** to be **depressed**.

Actually

reason

unhappy

Believe me

gloomy

dispirited

melancholy

sad

Do try to bear up.

You must

You really should

You ought to

(b) Please, **do stop** telling me to bear up! It only makes matters worse.

don't keep on

don't always be

beat down

A. You say it's a bargain? Hm! A bargain, you say? You should've beaten him down a bit.

B. I did beat him down.

A. You should've beaten him down to £3.

B. I beat him down to £1.

A. You should've . . . to £1? Hem! Er . . . well, I still say you were robbed!

(a) You should've beaten him down.
He them

(b) I did beat him down.
He them

(a) You should've beaten him down to three pounds.
He them four dollars

(b) I beat him down to one pound.
He them dollar

beat off

- A. Tom's terribly boring. He's always talking about the war. He never stops talking about his army days. He's a dreadful bore!
- B. He won a medal, you know.
- A. No, I didn't know.
- B. Yes, he beat off an enemy attack single-handed. All his comrades were dead. Reinforcements hadn't arrived. But Tom managed to beat the enemy off all on his own.
- A. Funny – I've never heard him mention that.

(b) He beat off the **attack** **single-handedly**.
onslaught all on his own
offensive all by himself
enemy
forces

(a) **Funny** – I've never heard him **mention** that.
Strange refer to
That's odd talk about

beat up

(i)

A. There! Three eggs. Now I'm going to beat up the mixture with my fork.

B. Mother will be furious when she comes in!

A. How long should I beat it up, do you think?

B. You can beat it up until your arm drops off for all I care – it'll be a ghastly cake, anyway!

(a) Now I'm going to beat (up) the mixture (up) with my fork.
ingredients whisk
batter

(b) Mother will be furious when she comes in!
very cross gets back
angry comes back
wild comes home

beat up

(ii)

A. Well, as I said, the bandits stopped the lorry, and they beat up the driver dreadfully. I wasn't beaten up quite so badly.

B. And your mysterious passenger? Did they beat him up too?

A. No. As a matter of fact he beat them up. That's why nothing was stolen.

(a) The bandits beat (up) the driver (up) dreadfully.
thieves guard terribly
robbers policemen very badly
gangsters victim
hi-jackers driver's mate

(b) And you?

What about you?

What happened to you?

(a) I wasn't beaten up quite so badly.
too badly
very much
much at all

block up

A. Stop!

B. But I want to drive in.

A. You can't. The entrance's been blocked up.

B. But it can't've been blocked up. I live just over there. I always come this way.

A. Well it has been blocked up.

B. Who's blocked it up?

A. I have.

(a) The **entrance's** been blocked up.

gateway's

passage's

path's

road's

way's

track's

(b) Who's it been blocked up by?

(a) **By me.**

Me.

blow out

A. Now, where are the matches? I'll light the candles on the cake. One, two, three, four, five There! Now, Margaret, you must blow them all out.

B. But I want to blow out the candles!

A. Stop it! You mustn't! It isn't your birthday, John, it's Margaret's. Margaret, dear, go on – blow really hard. That's the way! What a clever girl! Well done! Now we'll cut the cake. Shall we let him help us to eat it, if he's good? Or shall we eat it all ourselves?

(b) I want to blow (out) the **candles** (out)!

match

taper

(a) **Stop it!** It isn't your birthday, **John**, it's **Margaret's**.

Stop that

You mustn't

blow up

(i)*

- A. They're enjoying themselves. It's a marvellous party. Can I do anything to help?
- B. Well, I've blown up nearly all the balloons. Yes, this lovely red one's the last. You can blow it up if you like.
- A. Ah! I'm rather good at blowing balloons up.
- B. Don't blow it up any further! It'll burst! There, what did I tell you?
- A. Hem! Yes. Er . . . ah. Well, can I do anything else to help?

(a) Can I do anything to help?

(b) Well, I've blown (up) **nearly** all the balloons (up). You can blow this up, if you like.

almost
practically
just about

(a) Ah! I'm **rather** good at blowing balloons up.

quite
pretty

blow up

(ii)

- A. It's calm now. But what will happen if a storm blows up?
- B. If a storm blows up, we shall get wet.
- A. And the boat?
- B. The boat'll get wet too. But don't worry – it won't sink.

(a) But what will happen if a **storm** blows up?

wind
gale
hurricane

(b) If a **storm** blows up, we shall **get wet**.

wind	ride it out
gale	signal for help
hurricane	say a prayer

blow up
(iii)

- A. Don't be a fool! Can't you smell the fumes?
If you light a match, the whole place will
blow up!
B. It needs blowing up!
A. But not with me in it, thank you very much!

- (a) If you **light** a match the whole place will blow up!
the fuse ship
press the button cellar
the plunger installation
pull the trigger tank
(b) It **needs** blowing up! arsenal
wants to be blown
deserves

blow up
(iv)

- A. Yes, we have enough explosive to blow up the
bridge.
B. Good. We'll clear the area. Clear the whole
area! Clear it! They're going to blow the
bridge up! They're blowing it up in fifteen
minutes!

- (a) Yes, we have enough **explosive** to blow (up) the **bridge** (up).
high explosive building
dynamite house
T.N.T. machine
gelignite tunnel
(b) Clear the whole area! They're going to blow (up) the bridge (up)!