

Phrasal verbs

CEFR B1-B2 · 20 questions · A4 / US Letter

Verb plus particle, three types, and the pronoun rule that learners break most often.

The rule

What a phrasal verb is

- A phrasal verb is a verb plus a particle: get up, turn on, look after.
- The particle can be an adverb or a preposition. It changes the meaning of the verb.
- Some phrasal verbs are literal: sit down means take a seat. Others are idiomatic: give up means stop trying.
- Learn the whole phrase, including the usual object: "look after a child", "run out of milk".

Type 1: no object

- Some phrasal verbs never take an object. Use them alone or with a place or time.
- get up, sit down, stand up, come back, go out, grow up, break down, wake up, hurry up, show up.
- "The car broke down on the motorway." "She grew up in Canada."
- Do not put an object after these verbs: "I woke up the alarm" is wrong. Say "The alarm woke me up".

Type 2: the object comes after the particle

- Some phrasal verbs are inseparable. The object must follow the whole phrase.
- look after someone, look for something, deal with something, get on with someone, run into someone, come across something, look forward to something.
- "She looks after her little brother." Not "She looks her little brother after".
- "I ran into an old friend." Not "I ran an old friend into".

Type 3: separable verbs

- With separable verbs, the object can go before or after the particle: "turn off the light" or "turn the light off".
- common separable verbs: turn on, turn off, pick up, put on, take off, throw away, write down, fill in, switch off, wake up.
- A pronoun must go between the verb and the particle: "turn it off", never "turn off it".
- The same rule applies to pick it up, put it on, take it off, write it down and throw it away.

How to learn them without pain

- Learn five at a time inside a full sentence. A bare list does not stick.
- Group them by verb: get up, get on, get off, get back, get over. Then group them by topic: travel, money, relationships.
- Note the register. "Put off" is normal in speech but sounds casual in a formal report; "postpone" fits there.

- Use the drill on this page twice: once today and once after two days. The second pass is where the memory forms.

Questions

Write your answer on the line under each question. Check your work with the answer key on the last page.

1. Please turn ___ the music. It is too loud.

2. I ran ___ an old friend at the station.

3. The car ___ on the motorway, so we called for help.

4. Can you ___ my keys while I park the car?

5. The radio is too loud. Can you turn ___?

6. She ___ her coat and left the house.

7. We have ___ sugar, so I will buy some.

8. I do not ___ my new boss very well.

9. Do not throw that box away. I need to ___.

10. He ___ smoking after twenty years.

11. I need to ___ when the next train leaves.

12. We ___ the meeting until next week.

13. Please ___ your shoes before you come in.

14. The alarm clock ___ me ___ at six.

15. I ___ your message on the kitchen table.

16. She is very organised. She ___ every detail.

17. Can you ___ the form before Friday?

18. The children ___ in the countryside.

19. I am ___ to meeting your family.

20. He ___ late for the meeting again.

Answer key

Phrasal verbs · CEFR B1-B2

1. **down** — Turn down means make quieter. "Turn of" is not a phrasal verb; turn off means stop it completely.
2. **into** — Run into somebody means meet them by chance. It is inseparable, so the object follows the whole phrase.
3. **broke down** — Break down means stop working. A car breaks down; a relationship breaks up.
4. **look after** — Look after means take care of. Look for means try to find, which does not fit a request to hold them.
5. **it down** — A pronoun must go between the verb and the particle: turn it down. "Turn down it" and "turn off it" are wrong.
6. **put on** — Put on clothes means dress in them. Put off means postpone; put out means extinguish.
7. **run out of** — Run out of something means have none left. The preposition "of" cannot be dropped.
8. **get on with** — Get on with somebody means have a good relationship. Without the object, "get on" can also mean manage, but here the object needs "with".
9. **write it down** — Write down is separable, and the pronoun goes in the middle: write it down.
10. **gave up** — Give up something means stop doing it. Give in means surrender; give out means distribute.
11. **find out** — Find out means discover information. "Find" alone means locate an object.
12. **put off** — Put off means postpone. Put on has the opposite sense of arranging an event to happen sooner or to dress.
13. **take off** — Take off clothes means remove them. Take out means remove something from a place.
14. **woke ... up** — Wake someone up means make them stop sleeping. Wake up is separable, so the pronoun goes in the middle: woke me up.
15. **came across** — Come across something means find it by chance. Come over means visit.
16. **deals with** — Deal with something means handle it. The "with" is part of the phrase.
17. **fill in** — Fill in a form means complete it. In American English, fill out a form is also common.
18. **grew up** — Grow up means spend your childhood. It has no object, so nothing goes between "grew" and "up".
19. **looking forward** — Look forward to something means feel happy about a future event. The "to" is a preposition, so the next verb takes -ing: meeting.
20. **showed up** — Show up means arrive. Show off means try to impress people.