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50 Phrasal Verbs with Multiple Meanings (with Explanation)

What is a Phrasal Verb? (Very Simple Explanation)

A **phrasal verb** is made of:

a verb + a small word (preposition or adverb)

Together, they create a **new meaning** that is **often different** from the main verb.

Examples

- **look + up** → look up (search / improve)
- **take + off** → take off (fly / remove / become successful)

Important:

You **cannot** always guess the meaning by translating each word.

Context decides the meaning.

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Why are phrasal verbs important for PTE?

- Common in **Reading & Listening**
- Appear in **Fill in the Blanks**
- Often used instead of single-word verbs

Daily Plan: Learn 10 Phrasal Verbs Every Day



Time: 30–40 minutes per day

Rule: Learn meaning + context, not memorisation.



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Daily Study Steps (Same Every Day)

Step 1: Read meanings (10 minutes)

- Read all meanings for each phrasal verb
 - Notice **how the meaning changes with context**
-

Step 2: Study examples (10 minutes)

- Read example sentences carefully
- Ask:

Is this physical, abstract, or emotional?

Step 3: Say your own sentence (5 minutes)

- Create one sentence for each phrasal verb
 - Keep it simple
-

Step 4: Quick revision (5 minutes)

- Cover meanings and recall them
 - Do not memorise word-by-word
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5-Day Plan (50 Phrasal Verbs)

Day 1

Phrasal Verbs 1–10

Day 2

Phrasal Verbs 11–20

Day 3

Phrasal Verbs 21–30

Day 4

Phrasal Verbs 31–40

Day 5

Phrasal Verbs 41–50



1. Take off

Meaning depends on what follows

- **Plane leaves the ground**

The plane **took off** on time.

Explanation: “Plane” tells us this is about flying.

- **Remove clothing**

Please **take off** your jacket.

Explanation: “Jacket” is a physical object you remove.

- **Become successful quickly**

Her career **took off** after graduation.

Explanation: No physical object → abstract meaning (success).



2. Break down

- **Stop working**

The machine **broke down**.

Explanation: Machines “break down” when they stop functioning.

- **Analyse**

The data was **broken down** into categories.

Explanation: “Data” shows this means analysing information.

- **Lose emotional control**

He **broke down** during the interview.

Explanation: A person + emotions = emotional meaning.

3. Set up

- **Establish / create**

The company was **set up** in 2015.

Explanation: Organisations are “set up” when created.

- **Arrange / prepare**

The system was **set up** for testing.

Explanation: “System” + “testing” shows preparation.

4. Pick up

- **Collect**

She **picked up** the documents.



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Explanation: Physical object → physical action.

- **Learn / acquire**

He **picked up** English quickly.

Explanation: Languages are learned, not collected.

- **Increase**

Sales **picked up** last month.

Explanation: Numbers rising = increase.

5. Run out

- **Have no more**

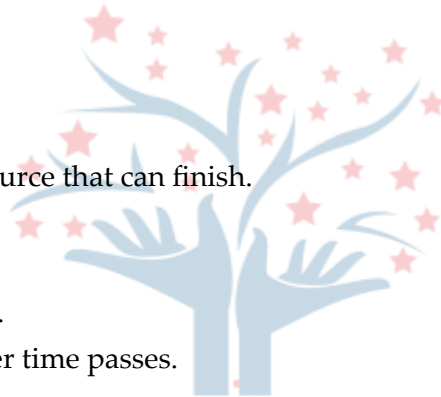
The project **ran out** of money.

Explanation: "Money" is a resource that can finish.

- **Expire (time)**

The contract **runs out** next year.

Explanation: Contracts end after time passes.



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6. Turn out

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- **Result**

The plan **turned out** to be successful.

Explanation: "To be" shows a final result.

- **Attend / appear**

Many people **turned out** for the event.

Explanation: People arriving = attendance.

7. Put off



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- **Delay**

The meeting was **put off**.

Explanation: Meetings can be moved to a later time.

- **Discourage**

The noise **put her off** studying.

Explanation: Feelings or motivation are affected.

8. Bring up

- **Raise a topic**

She **brought up** an important issue.

Explanation: Discussions “bring up” ideas.

- **Raise a child**

He was **brought up** in Canada.

Explanation: Past passive form + place = upbringing.

9. Work out

- **Solve**

They **worked out** the problem.

Explanation: “Problem” signals solving.

- **Exercise**

She **works out** every morning.

Explanation: Time + routine → physical exercise.

- **End successfully**



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Everything **worked out** well.

Explanation: General situation → positive result.

10. Look up

- **Search for information**

She **looked up** the word.

Explanation: "Word" + dictionary context.

- **Improve**

Things are **looking up**.

Explanation: Situation improving, not searching.

11. Take on

- **Accept responsibility or work**

She **took on** extra duties.

Explanation: "Duties" shows accepting work.

- **Challenge / compete against**

The company **took on** its competitors.

Explanation: "Competitors" shows competition.

12. Turn down

- **Reject**

The offer **was turned down**.

Explanation: Offers can be accepted or rejected.



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- **Reduce (level or volume)**

Please **turn down** the music.

Explanation: Sound levels can be reduced.

13. Call off

- **Cancel (event)**

The match was **called off**.

Explanation: Events can be cancelled.

- **Stop an action**

The search was **called off**.

Explanation: An ongoing action can be stopped.

14. Go on

- **Continue**

The lecture **went on** for hours.

Explanation: Time words show continuation.

- **Happen**

What is **going on** here?

Explanation: Asking about a situation or event.

15. Come out

- **Be published or released**

The report **came out** last week.

Explanation: Reports and books are released.

- **Become known**



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The truth finally **came out**.

Explanation: Information is revealed.

16. Carry on

- **Continue**

The experiment **carried on** despite problems.

Explanation: "Despite" shows continuation.

- **Behave in a particular way (often negative)**

He **carried on** during the meeting.

Explanation: Behaviour context, not activity.

17. Come across

- **Find by chance**

She **came across** an old document.

Explanation: Unexpected discovery.

- **Seem / appear**

He **came across** as confident.

Explanation: "As + adjective" shows impression.

18. Bring about

- **Cause**

The policy **brought about** major changes.

Explanation: Abstract noun = cause.



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- **Achieve**

The reforms **brought about** improvement.

Explanation: Result achieved through action.

19. Get over

- **Recover from (illness/problem)**

She **got over** the illness quickly.

Explanation: Health or problems can be recovered from.

- **Overcome emotionally**

He never **got over** the loss.

Explanation: Emotional recovery.

20. Put up

- **Build or display**

The company **put up** a new building.

Explanation: Physical construction.

- **Tolerate**

She refused to **put up** with the noise.

Explanation: "With" shows tolerance meaning.

21. Turn up

- **Appear / arrive**



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Several students **turned up** late.

Explanation: People arriving = appearance.

- **Increase (volume/level)**

Please **turn up** the volume.

Explanation: Sound or level is increased.

22. Look over

- **Review / examine**

The teacher **looked over** the report.

Explanation: Checking or reviewing work.

- **Ignore / overlook**

He **looked over** the mistake.

Explanation: Context shows something was ignored.

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23. Make up

- **Invent**

She **made up** an excuse.

Explanation: Excuses are created.

- **Form / constitute**

Women **make up** half the population.

Explanation: Numbers or groups form a whole.

- **Reconcile**

They argued but later **made up**.

Explanation: Relationship context.



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24. Come in

- **Enter**

Please **come in**.

Explanation: Physical entry.

- **Become involved / relevant**

Experience **comes in** useful here.

Explanation: Abstract involvement.

25. Hold on

- **Wait**

Please **hold on** for a moment.

Explanation: Time clue → waiting.

- **Maintain / keep**

She held on to her beliefs.

Explanation: Abstract meaning (beliefs).

26. Get through

- **Finish / complete**

She **got through** the exam.

Explanation: Exams can be completed.

- **Contact successfully**

I couldn't **get through** to him.



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Explanation: Phone/communication context.

- **Survive**

They **got through** a difficult period.

Explanation: Life situation context.

27. Put on

- **Wear**

She **put on** a jacket.

Explanation: Clothing context.

- **Organise / present**

The school **put on** a play.

Explanation: Events are organised.

- **Gain (weight)**

He **put on** weight.

Explanation: Health context.



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28. Come back

- **Return**

She **came back** from work.

Explanation: Physical movement.

- **Reappear / become popular again**

Fashion trends **come back**.

Explanation: Trends reappearing.



29. Pass out

- **Lose consciousness**

He **passed out** from exhaustion.

Explanation: Health context.

- **Distribute**

The teacher **passed out** the papers.

Explanation: Objects being given.

30. Bring in

- **Introduce (law/idea)**

The government **brought in** new rules.

Explanation: Policies are introduced.

- **Earn**

The business **brings in** high profits.

Explanation: Money context.

31. Cut down

- **Reduce (amount/size)**

The company **cut down** costs.

Explanation: Costs can be reduced.

- **Chop (tree/object)**

They **cut down** the old tree.



Explanation: Physical object being removed.

32. Back up

- **Support**

The data **backs up** the argument.

Explanation: Evidence supports claims.

- **Make a copy (data)**

Remember to **back up** your files.

Explanation: Computer/data context.

- **Stop suddenly (traffic/machines)**

Traffic **backed up** on the highway.

Explanation: Congestion context.

33. Carry out

- **Perform / conduct**

The research was **carried out** carefully.

Explanation: Studies are conducted.

- **Complete a task**

The plan was **carried out** successfully.

Explanation: Tasks or plans are executed.

34. Come around

- **Recover consciousness**

He fainted but soon **came around**.

Explanation: Health context.



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- **Change opinion**

She finally **came around** to the idea.

Explanation: Opinion or belief context.

35. Give up

- **Stop trying**

He refused to **give up**.

Explanation: Effort context.

- **Quit a habit**

She **gave up** smoking.

Explanation: Habit context.



36. Look out

- **Be careful**

Look out! There's a car coming.

Explanation: Warning context.

- **Watch for**

Please **look out** for errors.

Explanation: Attention/monitoring context.

37. Move on

- **Progress**



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Let's **move on** to the next topic.

Explanation: Discussion flow.

- **Recover emotionally**

It's time to **move on** after the failure.

Explanation: Emotional recovery.

38. Take over

- **Gain control**

The company was **taken over**.

Explanation: Business context.

- **Replace temporarily**

She **took over** the class.

Explanation: Role replacement.



39. Get out

- **Leave**

Please **get out** of the room.

Explanation: Physical movement.

- **Become known**

The news **got out** quickly.

Explanation: Information spreading.

40. Turn back



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- **Return**

They **turned back** due to bad weather.

Explanation: Travel context.

- **Reverse progress**

It's hard to **turn back** time.

Explanation: Abstract metaphorical meaning.

41. Check out

- **Examine / investigate**

The researcher **checked out** the data.

Explanation: Data or information is examined.

- **Leave (hotel/library)**

Guests must **check out** by noon.

Explanation: Hotel context = departure.

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42. Come up

- **Be mentioned / arise**

Several issues **came up** during the meeting.

Explanation: Problems or topics appear.

- **Approach / arrive**

She **came up** to the desk.

Explanation: Physical movement.



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43. Fill in

- **Complete (form/document)**

Please **fill in** the application.

Explanation: Forms are completed.

- **Replace temporarily**

She **filled in** for the teacher.

Explanation: Job/role replacement.

44. Go over

- **Review / check**

Let's **go over** the report.

Explanation: Academic/work context.

- **Exceed (limit)**

Costs **went over** the budget.

Explanation: Numbers passing a limit.

45. Hold back

- **Restrain / control**

She **held back** her emotions.

Explanation: Emotional control.

- **Delay progress**

Poor planning **held back** development.

Explanation: Growth or progress context.



46. Keep on

- **Continue**

He **kept on** working despite difficulties.

Explanation: Ongoing action.

- **Persist (often annoying)**

She **kept on** asking questions.

Explanation: Repeated behaviour.

47. Lay off

- **Dismiss from a job**

Several workers were **laid off**.

Explanation: Employment context.

- **Stop doing something**

You should **lay off** junk food.

Explanation: Advice / behaviour context.

48. Pull out

- **Withdraw**

The company **pulled out** of the deal.

Explanation: Business decision.

- **Remove (vehicle/object)**

The car **pulled out** suddenly.



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Explanation: Physical movement.

49. Show up

- **Appear / arrive**

Only a few students **showed up**.

Explanation: Attendance context.

- **Expose / reveal**

The test **showed up** errors.

Explanation: Problems becoming visible.

50. Stay up

- **Remain awake**

She **stayed up** late studying.

Explanation: Sleep/time context.

- **Remain standing / continue functioning**

The system **stayed up** all night.

Explanation: Technology/system context.
