

CHECK YOUR ENGLISH
VOCABULARY FOR

PHRASAL VERBS AND IDIOMS



All you need to pass your exams

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AND
IDIOMS

Rawdon Wyatt

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Introduction

If you want to practise and develop your knowledge of phrasal verbs and idioms, you will find this book very useful. The various exercises contain many of the most common phrasal verbs and idioms, together with some useful spoken expressions that you might expect to hear or use in an English-speaking environment.

You should not go through this book mechanically from beginning to end. It is better to choose one particular verb or topic, do the exercise(s), make a record of any new words and expressions that you learn, then practise using these in sentences or situations of your own. When you feel you have a good command of these, move to another verb or topic and do the same. You should also review the things you have learned on a regular basis, so that they remain 'fresh' in your mind and become part of your 'active' vocabulary.

The meanings of most of the phrasal verbs and idioms are explained in the book, either in the exercises themselves, or in the answer key at the back. This key also provides you with lots of similar or alternative expressions, together with examples of how they are used. However, we recommend that you keep a good dictionary with you, and refer to it when necessary. In particular, we recommend the A & C Black *Easier English Intermediate Dictionary* (ISBN 0-7475-6989-4) or the *Macmillan English Dictionary* (ISBN 0-333-96482-9), from which many of the definitions and sample sentences in this book have been taken.

No vocabulary book can possibly contain all of the thousands of English phrasal verbs and idioms that you are likely to come across or need, so it is important to acquire new ones from other sources. If you have access to English-language newspapers, popular magazines, television and radio programmes, films and albums of popular music, you will find that these are excellent resources.

We hope that you enjoy doing the exercises in this book. Before you begin, we suggest that you read this important information about phrasal verbs and idioms.

What is a phrasal verb?

A phrasal verb is a verb formed from two (or sometimes three) parts: a *verb* and an *adverb* or *preposition*. These adverbs and prepositions are often called *particles* when they are used in a phrasal verb.

Most phrasal verbs are formed from a small number of verbs (for example, *get*, *go*, *come*, *put* and *set*) and a small number of particles (for example, *away*, *out*, *off*, *up* and *in*).

Phrasal verbs sometimes have meanings that you can easily guess (for example, *sit down* or *look for*). However, in most cases their meanings are quite different from the meanings of the verb they are formed from. For example, *hold up* can mean 'to cause a delay' or 'to try to rob someone'. The original meaning of *hold* (for example, *to hold something in your hands*) no longer applies.

There are five main types of phrasal verb. These are:

1. Intransitive phrasal verbs (= phrasal verbs which do not need an object).
For example: *You're driving too fast. You ought to **slow down**.*
2. Transitive phrasal verbs (= phrasal verbs which must have an object) where the object can come in one of two positions:
 - (1) Between the verb and the particle(s).
For example: *I think I'll **put my jacket on**.*
 - or
 - (2) After the particle.
For example: *I think I'll **put on my jacket**.*

However, if the object is a pronoun (*he, she, it*, etc), it must usually come between the verb and the particle.

For example: *I think I'll **put it on**.* (NOT *I think I'll **put on it**.*)

3. Transitive phrasal verbs where the object must come between the verb and the particle.

For example: *Our latest designs **set our company apart** from our rivals.*

4. Transitive phrasal verbs where the object must come after the particle.

For example: *John **takes after** his mother.*

*Why do you **put up with** the way he treats you?*

5. Transitive phrasal verbs with two objects, one after the verb and one after the particle.

For example: *They **put their success down to** good planning.*

Some transitive phrasal verbs can be used in the passive, but the object *cannot* come between the verb and the particle.

For example:

Active: *The soldiers **blew up** the bridge / The soldiers **blew** the bridge **up**.*

Passive: *The bridge was **blown up** by the soldiers.*

Active: ***Switch** the lights **off** before you leave / **Switch off** the lights before you leave.*

Passive: *The lights must be **switched off** before you leave.*

Active: *It's time they **did away with** these silly rules.*

Passive: *It's time these silly rules were **done away with**.* (where the subject is either not known or not needed).

A dictionary such as the *Bloomsbury Easier English Intermediate Dictionary* or the *Macmillan English Dictionary* will clearly show you the way you should use each phrasal verb.

What is an idiom?

An idiom is an expression where the meaning is different from the meaning of the individual words.

For example, *to have your feet on the ground* is an idiom meaning 'to be sensible': "*Tara is an intelligent girl who **has both** her **feet** firmly **on the ground**.*"

A lot of idioms are formed using phrasal verbs.

For example: *After he left me, it took me a long time to **pick up the pieces*** (= It took me a long time to return to a normal life).

Many idioms are *colloquial*, which means that they are used in informal conversation rather than in writing or formal language.

For example: "*I won't tell anyone your secret. **My lips are sealed**.*"

In this book, you will find a lot of colloquial idioms, together with some examples of *slang* (very informal words and expressions that are often used by particular groups of people, such as teenagers). If an idiom that is being practised is informal or very informal, the book will tell you this.

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Idioms and other expressions using animals

Complete the idioms and other expressions in bold with an animal, insect, etc, from the box. Many of the animals must be used more than once. The meaning of each idiom / expression is explained in *italics* at the end of each sentence.

bee	bird	cat	chicken	dog	donkey	duck	fish	fly	goat
goose	hen	horse	monkey	pig	rat	shark	whale		

1. I always thought Laurence was rather shallow and superficial, but yesterday I saw him reading a book of Renaissance poetry. He's a bit of a **dark _____**, isn't he? (*someone with a secret, especially a secret ability, skill or achievement that surprises you when you discover it*)
2. I'm not going out with you looking like that. You **look like something that the _____ dragged in!** Brush your hair and put on some clean clothes! (*to have a very dirty or untidy appearance*)
3. I live on the 14th floor of a tower block, so I have a wonderful _____ **'s-eye view** of the town. (*a good view of something from a high position*)
4. How did I know that you were going out with Lucy? Aha! **A little _____ told me!** (*an expression used for saying that you are not going to say who told you something*)
5. It really **gets my _____**, the way she keeps interrupting all the time. (*to annoy someone*)
6. William didn't get the promotion he wanted last year, and he's had a _____ **in his bonnet** about it ever since. (*to be very involved in something that you think is important, in a way that other people find annoying*)
7. You really **let the _____ out of the bag** when you asked Louise what time her party started. She didn't know anything about it. It was supposed to be a surprise. (*to tell someone something that was supposed to be a secret*)
8. Where have you been? You're soaking wet! You **look like a drowned _____!** (*looking very wet and cold*)
9. Tony! What a surprise! It's wonderful to see you again. I haven't seen you **for _____'s years!** (*an extremely long time*)
10. The hotel used to be the best in town, but since the new manager took over it's really **gone to the _____s.** (*not as good at it was in the past*)
11. I don't trust Eric when he says he's working late at the office. To be honest, I **smell a _____.** (*to be suspicious, or to think that someone is trying to trick you*)
12. That's the third burger you've eaten. I wish you'd stop **making such a _____ of yourself.** (*to eat a lot of food*)
13. "Do you think I'll pass my driving test tomorrow, Julie?" "Sorry, Mark, I don't think you **have a _____ in hell's chance.**" (*to have no chance at all of doing something*)
14. I only started my new job last week, and I still feel **like a _____ out of water.** (*to be in a situation that you know nothing about or are not used to*)
15. "How did you know that Mr Roberts is going to resign?" "I **got it straight from the _____'s mouth.**" (*information that comes from someone who is directly involved – in this case, from Mr Roberts*)
16. Have you met our new manager? He really **thinks he's the _____'s knees!** (*to think you are very clever and important*)

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17. What do you think of our new English teacher? Personally I think she's a bit of **a cold** _____. (*someone who is not very friendly*)
 18. Antonia is very timid: she **wouldn't say boo to a** _____. (*an expression used to describe someone who is very quiet and shy*)
 19. Why do I always have to **do the** _____ **work**? (*boring work that needs a lot of effort but has to be done as part of a job*)
 20. I'd love to be **a** _____ **on the wall** when Debbie tells Mr Roberts what she thinks of him! (*to be able to see what people are doing without them noticing you*)
 21. Two weeks before her wedding, Jane went to a nightclub for her _____ **night**. (*a celebration for a woman who is about to get married, in which only her women friends take part*)
 22. I'm so hungry, **I could eat a** _____! (*an expression used for saying that you are very hungry*)
 23. The bank wouldn't lend me the money, so I had to go to a **loan** _____. (*someone who lends money to people and charges them a very high rate of interest*)
 24. My boss is such a _____ **bag**. I don't think I can go on working for her much longer. (*somebody who is unpleasant with other people*)
 25. I feel really sorry for poor old Steven: he's so _____ **pecked**. (*criticised and given orders all the time by a wife or female partner*)
 26. It was a very simple job, but I **made a** _____ **'s ear of it**. (*do something very badly*)
 27. I wanted to go to Spain for my holiday, but just before I left for the airport I lost my passport. As you can imagine, that really **cooked my** _____. (*to cause a lot of problems for someone, or spoil their plans*)
 28. I can't help you at the moment, I'm afraid. I've **got bigger** _____ **to fry**. (*to have more important things to do or think about*)
 29. The party was wonderful. We had **a** _____ **of a time**. (*to have a lot of fun*)
 30. You can tell John that he's a stupid boring idiot if you like, but I'm afraid it will just be **water off a** _____ **'s back**. (*an expression used for saying that advice, warnings or insults do not affect someone*)
 31. I've got so many things to do today. I'm **running around like a headless** _____! (*trying to do a lot of things quickly without being sensible or calm about it*)
 32. He thinks he's better than us. I wish he would **get off his high** _____. (*stop behaving as if he knows more or is better than anyone else*)
 33. Corporate **fat** _____ **s** have once again been accused of putting profits before people. (*people who receive too much money for the job they do*)
 34. I don't like him, I don't respect him, and I **don't give a** _____ **'s** what he thinks. (*to not care about something at all*)
 35. While we're in town doing our shopping, let's go and see my mother. That way, we can **kill two** _____ **s with one stone**. (*to achieve two aims with one action*)
 36. I've never seen Arnie looking so happy. He's **like a** _____ **with two tails**. (*to be very happy because something good has happened*)

Note that most of the expressions in this exercise are informal or very informal.

Idioms and other expressions for describing character and personality

The words and expressions in the box can all be used informally to describe different kinds of people. Use them to complete sentences 1 – 35. Note that many of the words / expressions have a negative connotation and are not very polite, so you should be careful how you use them!

anorak	bigmouth	bunny boiler	busybody	chatterbox	chinless wonder
clock-watcher	couch potato	crank	creep	daydreamer	Don Juan
eager beaver	early bird	golden boy	happy camper	life and soul of the party	
moaning Minnie	pain in the neck	rolling stone	rough diamond	salt of the earth	
Scrooge	scrounger	skiver	slave driver	smart Alec	smart cookie
stuffed shirt	tearaway	troublemaker	wallflower	wet blanket	wimp
wolf in sheep's clothing					

1. Nobody likes Peter very much because he's so annoying. He's a right _____!
2. Andy is so boring. Did you know that his idea of a perfect day is going to the station to collect train registration numbers? What a / an _____!
3. I know that you don't like your job very much, but I wish you would stop complaining about it all the time. Don't be such a / an _____!
4. Imelda loves working here: she's a real _____.
5. Alan is an excellent and intelligent manager who runs the department well and deals effectively with any problems that come up. Everyone agrees that he's a / an _____.
6. You've been sitting in front of the television for almost four hours. Why don't you turn it off and go for a walk? You're turning into a / an _____.
7. We were having a wonderful evening until Anne joined us. Why does she have to be so negative about everything all the time? She's such a / an _____!
8. Don't be such a / an _____! If you concentrated instead of speaking all the time, you would get more work done.
9. If you want some help, ask Imelda. She's always happy and willing to help out: she's a real _____!
10. I hope Rick comes out with us tonight. He's such good fun, always the _____.
11. Poor Samantha is a bit of a / an _____. She would have much more fun and would get to know more people if she had more confidence.
12. Don is a bit of a / an _____. He never eats vegetables because he thinks they slow down your brain!
13. Don't be such a / an _____! You've only got a small cut on your hand; you haven't lost a whole arm!
14. All the newspapers are writing about Gordon Stapleton. He's the new _____ of English football.
15. When Laurence ended his relationship with Mandy, she refused to accept it and started sending him insulting letters. Then one day she went to his house and threw a brick through his window! I never realised she was such a _____!