A phrasal verb is a verb plus one or two small words, like get up or look after. The small words change the meaning, so learn each one as a whole phrase, with its example. Read a few every day, say them out loud, and try to use one in a real sentence the same day.

The 50 verbs - study table

Phrasal verb	Meaning	Tiny example
ask out	invite someone on a date	He asked her out for coffee.
back up	support, or copy files	Please back up your photos.
break down	stop working, or start crying	Our car broke down twice.
break up	end a relationship	They broke up last spring.
bring up	start a topic, or raise a child	Do not bring up work tonight.
call off	cancel something planned	They called off the match.
calm down	become relaxed after anger	Take a breath and calm down.
carry on	continue doing something	Carry on with your work.
check in	register at a hotel or flight	We checked in at noon.
check out	look at, or pay and leave	Check out this new song.
clean up	make a place tidy	Let us clean up the kitchen.
come back	return to a place	She will come back on Friday.
come up with	think of an idea or plan	He came up with a great idea.
cut down on	use or eat less of something	I am cutting down on sugar.
drop off	take someone or something somewhere	I will drop you off at school.
figure out	understand or solve something	I cannot figure out this sum.
fill in	complete a form	Please fill in this form.
find out	learn new information	I found out the truth today.
get along with	have a friendly relationship	She gets along with everyone.
get over	feel better after illness or sadness	It took time to get over the loss.
get up	leave bed in the morning	I get up at six on weekdays.
give away	give something for free	He gave away his old bike.
give up	stop trying, or quit a habit	Never give up on your goals.
go on	continue, or happen	What is going on here?
grow up	become an adult	He grew up in a small village.
hand in	give work to a teacher	Hand in your homework, please.
hang out	spend free time relaxing	We hang out at the park.
hold on	wait a moment	Hold on, I am almost ready.
hurry up	do something faster	Hurry up or we will miss it.
keep on	continue doing something	Keep on practising every day.
let down	disappoint someone	Do not let your team down.
look after	take care of someone	She looks after her grandfather.

look for	try to find something	I am looking for my keys.
look forward to	feel happy about a future event	I look forward to the holidays.
look up	search for information	Look up the word in a dictionary.
make up	invent a story, or become friends again	He made up an excuse.
pass away	die (polite word)	His uncle passed away last year.
pay back	return money you borrowed	I will pay you back tomorrow.
pick up	lift, collect, or learn by practice	Pick up the baby gently.
point out	show or mention something	She pointed out my mistake.
put off	delay until later	Do not put off your studies.
put on	wear clothes, or gain weight	Put on your coat, it is cold.
run out of	have no more of something	We ran out of milk.
set up	start or arrange something	They set up a small business.
take off	leave the ground, or remove clothes	The plane took off late.
take up	start a new hobby or activity	She took up painting last year.
turn down	refuse an offer, or lower volume	He turned down the job offer.
turn up	arrive, or increase volume	He turned up an hour late.
wake up	stop sleeping	I wake up early in summer.
work out	exercise, or find the answer	It all worked out well.

Study tip: phrasal verbs love groups. Learn the get family together (get up, get over, get along with), then the take family, then the look family. Three a day is fifteen in a school week.

Short practice - fill in the phrasal verb

1. I cannot hear the TV. Please turn it ____. (up / down - louder)
2. We have no sugar left. We have _____ sugar. (run out of)
3. She _____ her little sister while her mother is at work. (looks after)
4. Please _____ your name and address on this form. (fill in)
5. The meeting is cancelled. They have _____ it _____. (called / off)
6. He _____ a wonderful plan for the school trip. (came up with)

Answers

1. up
2. run out of
3. looks after
4. fill in
5. called (it) off
6. came up with