Multi-word verbs

*The plane has now **taken off**.*
***Look at** these pictures.*
*He thinks he can **get away with** everything.*

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Multi-word verbs

…are multi-word combinations that comprise relatively idiomatic units and function like single verbs.

3 main types:

Phrasal verbs: verb + adverb particle
Prepositional verbs: verb + preposition
Phrasal-prepositional verbs: verb + particle + preposition

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adverb particle vs. preposition

A **preposition** requires a following noun phrase (NP) as a complement. An **adverb particle** does not need a noun phrase.

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Noun phrase (NP)

A **noun phrase** is either a single noun or pronoun or a group of words containing a noun or a pronoun that function together as a noun or pronoun, as the **subject** or **object** of a verb.

John was late.
('John' is the NP functioning as the **subject** of the verb)

He drinks milk.
('milk' is the NP functioning as the **object** of the verb)

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(a) Prepositions

against among as at beside for from into like of onto to upon with etc.

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(b) Adverb particles

ahead apart aside away back forward out (BrE) together etc.

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(c) Both prepositions and particles

about above across after along around by down in off on out (AmE) over past round through under up etc.

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Phrasal verbs

…are multi-word verb units consisting of a verb followed by an adverb particle (e.g. *carry out*, *find out*, or *pick up*). These adverb particles all have core spatial or locative meanings (e.g. *out, in, up, down, on, off*), but they are commonly used with extended meanings.

There are two major subcategories of phrasal verbs: **intransitive** and **transitive**.

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Transitive vs. intransitive

A **transitive verb** is one that takes an object.

e.g. *He opened the door.*

(‚door' is the object of the action; it is affected by the operation)

An **intransitive verb** is one that does not take an object.

e.g. *They arrived.*

(The verb does not require an object to complement it.)

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Intransitive phrasal verbs

*Oh **shut up**! You are so cruel.*

***Hold on**! What are you doing there?*

*I just **broke down** in tears when I saw the letter.*

*He would **get up** at daybreak.*

Such phrasal verbs are usually informal.

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1. Match these verbs with the explanations on the right.

1	I'm going to *get out* of New York.	a) stop being performed
2	The loudspeaker *came on* with a soft pooping noise.	b) be accepted as true
3	The BAA argues that air traffic is increasing and will *go on* doing so.	c) start functioning
4	She had *sat up* all night.	d) be no longer valid
5	The unloading had *gone ahead* very briskly	e) not go to bed
6	My passport's *run out*.	f) leave
7	The production had to *come off* because the theatre was already booked for a pantomime.	g) proceed
8	The prosecution had no evidence which would *stand up* in a court of law.	h) continue

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2. Put in *along, down, off, on, out, over* or *up*.

1 I just said it to her one day to shut her …….
2 Come ……. , Mike, say you'll do it.
3 She got …… and slammed the door.
4 The probability of a nuclear weapon going ……. by accident is slight.
5 He wanted me to come ……. for lunch.
6 He sat ……. on the edge of the bed.
7 But why don't you come ……. with us?

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Transitive phrasal verbs (1)

*Did you **point out** the faults on it then?*
*Margotte rarely **turned on** the television set.*
*I ventured to **bring up** the subject of the future.*

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Transitive phrasal verbs (2)

With transitive phrasal verbs the direct object can appear between the particle and the verb:

*They **turned on** the light.*
*They **turned** the light **on**.* (S V O A)

When the object is a personal pronoun, the S V O A order is in fact the only one allowable:

*They **turned** it **on**.*

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Transitive phrasal verbs (3)

Transitive phrasal verbs, like transitive verbs in general, can normally be turned into passive without stylistic awkwardness:

*Aunt Ada **brought up** Roy.*
*Roy was **brought up** by aunt Ada.*

Some of them do not have a passive:

*Jill and her boss don't **hit** it **off**.*
It is not **hit off (by Jill and her boss).*

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1. Match these verbs with the explanations on the right.

1	We must remember to *get* some more coffee *in*.	a) invent
2	Did you *pick up* any Swedish?	b) search for
3	Men at the top make the decisions, men at the bottom *carry* them *out*.	c) return
4	He was a good storyteller, and used to *make up* tales about animals.	d) learn
5	She *takes on* more work than is good for her.	e) put into practice
6	Did you *get* your books *back* to the library in time?	f) purchase
7	He consulted his dictionary to *look up* the meaning of the word 'apotheosis'.	g) agree to do

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Prepositional verbs (1)

All prepositional verbs take a prepositional object, that is the noun phrase occurring after the preposition.

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Prepositional verbs (2)

There are two major structural patterns for prepositional verbs:

Pattern 1: NP + verb + preposition+ NP

*I've never even **thought about** [it].*
*Britannia said he had **asked for** [permission to see the flight deck].*
*It just **looks like** [the barrel].*

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Prepositional verbs (3)

Pattern 2: NP + verb+ NP + preposition + NP

*No, they like to **accuse** women **of** [being mechanically inept].*

*He **said** farewell **to** [us] on this very spot.*

*But McGaughy **bases** his prediction **on** [first-hand experience].*

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1. Change the object to a pronoun; change the word order if necessary.

Examples:
Our lives and those of all other animals depend on oxygen. ⇨ Our lives and those of all other animals depend on ***it***.
They are putting on a special train service. ⇨ They are putting ***it*** on.

1 He would get back his old job. (**phrasal verb**)
2 I was talking to Mike about this. (**prepositional verb**)
3 Some people wanted to take over my father's oil importing business. (**phrasal verb**)
4 Melanie's mother drives by to pick up Carol. (**phrasal verb**)
5 We started to look for a house with a garden. (**prepositional verb**)
6 I don't believe in ghosts. (**prepositional verb**)
7 Mike can take off his father to perfection. (**phrasal verb**)
8 I don't see why you put on a phoney English accent. (**phrasal verb**)

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Phrasal-prepositional verbs (1)

The third major type of multi-word verbs has characteristics of both phrasal and prepositional verbs: **phrasal-prepositional verbs** consist of a lexical verb combined with an adverb particle plus a preposition. As with prepositional verbs, the complement of the preposition in these constructions functions as the direct object of the phrasal-prepositional verb.

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Phrasal-prepositional verbs (2)

There are two major structural patterns:

Pattern 1: NP + verb + particle + preposition + NP

*Oh I shall **look forward to** [this now].*

*Perhaps I can **get out of** [it] without having to tell her anything.*

*It's going to take time for you to **get back to** [full strength].*

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Phrasal-prepositional verbs (3)

Pattern 2: NP + verb + NP + particle + preposition + NP

*I could **hand** him **over to** [Sadiq].*

Only a few phrasal-prepositional verbs can take two objects (e.g. *put* NP *up to* NP, *bring* NP *up in* NP).

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Phrasal verbs, **prepositional verbs** and **phrasal-prepositional verbs** usually represent single semantic units that cannot be derived from the individual meanings of the two/three parts. As such, there are often simple lexical verbs that have similar meanings to multi-word verb units:

carry out ⇨ *perform* or *undertake*
look at ⇨ *observe*
get out of ⇨ *avoid*

These simple lexical verbs are more formal than the multi-word verbs.

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Have a look at sentence 1 and 2. Is there any difference?

*1. I **fell in**. (form a line)*
*2. More than an inch of rain **fell in** a few hours.*

… and what about the following sentences?

*3. I **put** my shoes **on**.*
*4. Don't **put** it **on** the floor.*

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*1. I **fell in**. (form a line)* ⇨ Intransitive phrasal verb
*2. More than an inch of rain **fell in** a few hours.*
⇨ Free combination

*3. I **put** my shoes **on**.* ⇨ Transitive phrasal verb
*4. Don't **put** it **on** the floor.* ⇨ Free combination

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Free combinations

All multi-word combinations can also occur as **free combinations**, where each element has separate grammatical and semantic status. Free combinations consist of a verb followed by either an adverb that carries its own distinct meaning, or by a prepositional phrase functioning as an adverbial. In practice, it is hard to make an absolute distinction between free combinations and fixed multi-word verbs; one should rather think of a cline on which some verbs, or uses of verbs, are relatively free and others relatively fixed.

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Features distinguishing multi-word verb combinations

There are a number of **semantic** and **structural** criteria used to distinguish the various types of multi-word verb combinations, e.g. adverb insertion, stress patterns, passive formation, relative clause formation, particle movement, *Wh*-question formation.

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Semantic criteria

…are useful for distinguishing between free combinations and multi-word constructions. With **free combinations, each word has an independent meaning**, while the meanings of multi-word verbs often cannot be predicted from the individual parts.

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Structural criteria

1 Particle movement
2 *Wh*-question formation

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1 Particle movement

…the optional placement of the particle either before or after the object noun phrase.

Nearly all **transitive phrasal verbs** allow particle movement, while such movement is not possible with **prepositional verbs** or **free combinations**:

*K came back and **picked up** the note.*

*He **picked** the phone **up**.*

Compare the impossibility of particle movement with the following prepositional verbs:

I'm waiting for somebody to come and get me.

It was hard to look at him.

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2 *Wh*-question formation

…is an important test for distinguishing between prepositional verbs followed by an object, and free combinations followed by an adverbial prepositional phrase.

With **prepositional verbs**, *wh*-questions are typically formed with *what* and *who*, indicating that the noun phrase following the preposition functions as the object of the prepositional verb:

*What are you **talking about**?*

*Who are you **working with**?*

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In contrast, *wh*-questions for **free combinations** are typically formed using the adverbial *wh*-words *where* and *when*, reflecting the adverbial function of the prepositional phrase following the verb:

Place:

***go to**: Where were they going?*

Time:

***leave on/at**: When are you leaving?*

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These criteria do not always result in clear cut distinctions among the categories: several verb combinations can function as more than one type, depending on the context; and some particular combinations can be interpreted as belonging to more than one category.

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Conclusion

- Multi-word verbs are very common in English, but can cause difficulty even for advanced learners
- their meanings are often different from the meanings of the base verb
- their grammatical behaviour may be complex
- as they are an essential part of everyday communication, mastery of them promotes more effective language use

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Thank you for your attention!

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