

80 common phrasal verbs (with meanings and examples)

1 back [x] up

to support or defend someone

When the class was making fun of me, only the teacher backed me up.

2 break down

to stop working, especially in reference to machines

The ice cream machine at McDonald's often breaks down.

3 call around

to contact multiple people

Roy called around to find a nearby mechanic.

4 call [x] off

to cancel a planned event

We called the party off. / We called off the party.

5 calm down

to relax after an energetic or irritated state

I need a few minutes to calm down after that match.

6 check [x] out

to examine a person or thing; when used in reference to a person, can connote looking at them with romantic or sexual interest

I'll check the contract out. / I'll check out the contract.

7 cheer [x] up

to make someone happy, especially if they were previously sad

Reading always cheers me up on a rainy day.

8 clean up

to be extremely successful in an endeavour such as business, sports, or gambling

Our hockey team cleaned up at the tournament and went home undefeated.

to stop engaging in questionable behaviour, such as consuming drugs or alcohol

Her boss said she had to either clean up or find a new job.

9 clean [x] up

to tidy an area

John cleaned the living room up. / John cleaned up the living room.

10 come around

to change one's opinion or see a new point of view

I never liked seafood but came around after trying fried calamari.

11 come between [x]

to interfere with a relationship between two people

After more than fifty years of partnership, nothing could come between them.

12 come down with [x]

to catch an illness

After traveling, Chandra came down with a cold.

13 come out of [x]

to happen as a consequence of another event

We missed a day of school, so at least some good came out of our boring class trip.

14 come up

to arise as a topic of discussion or receive attention

Everyone talked about how much they enjoyed the movie, but the run time never came up in the conversation.

to approach

While I was walking along the fence, a cow came up and licked my face.

to present itself or occur, as of an event or situation

Don't worry about a problem until it comes up.

15 come up with [x]

to think of an idea, especially as the first person to do so, or to produce a solution

Sahar comes up with her best story ideas at night, so she writes them down before she forgets them.

16 count on [x]

to rely or depend on someone or something)

If I'm ever making a mistake, I can count on my friends to warn me.

17 crack down on [x]

to attack or punish someone harshly; to penalize a behaviour

Ever since last month's accident, police have been cracking down on drunk driving.

18 dive into [x]

to eagerly begin a pursuit or activity

I'll dive into that new TV show later tonight.

19 dress up

to put on nice clothes

Abed dressed up for the award ceremony.

20 end up

to eventually reach some conclusion or destination

After thinking for a day, he ended up taking the job.

21 fall apart

to break into pieces

My new dress completely fell apart after just two washes.

to experience acute mental or emotional distress

He endured all kinds of harassment at work without flinching but fell apart when his cat got sick.

22 fill [x] up

to put into a container as much as it can contain

Bruce filled his water bottle up to the brim. / Bruce filled up his water bottle to the brim.

23 find out [x]

to discover or learn something

We didn't find out the news until we got back from dinner

24 get [x] across

to successfully communicate or explain something

The professor spoke for hours, but they didn't get anything across to the students.

25 get ahead

to succeed or progress

You'll never get ahead at this company unless you follow the rules.

26 get along with [x]

to be on harmonious terms with someone

My dog gets along with everyone as long as they're not a cat.

27 get around

to travel from place to place

In this city, it's impossible to get around without a car.

28 get around to [x]

to do something eventually

I'll get around to that project after the playoffs.

29 get at [x]

to reach or gain access to something

I can't quite get at this itch on my back.

to indicate or suggest something

These graphs are getting at the fact that we'll be bankrupt by next week.

30 get away

to escape or depart

Lucio liked to go to the lake every weekend, just to get away.

31 get away with [x]

to commit a crime or misdeed without incurring any negative consequences

The boss's nephew gets away with things that none of the other employees would.

32 get [x] back

to retrieve something

Rodger got his pencil back from Greta. / Rodger got back his pencil from Greta.

33 get back at [x]

to take revenge on someone

Laila promised herself that she would get back at whoever had started the rumor.

34 get by

to survive or manage at a minimum level

When Sheila lost her job, the family got by with only their savings.

35 get down

to enjoy oneself without inhibitions, especially with music or dancing

Vicente may be formal at work, but he sure knows how to get down to hip-hop.

36 get [x] down

to depress or discourage someone

Kima always gets everyone down with her stories from the hospital.

to record something by taking notes

The president spoke quickly at the press conference, and reporters were struggling to get all his comments down. / The president spoke quickly at the press conference, and reporters were struggling to get down all his comments.

37 get down to [x]

to begin or start something, especially something basic or fundamental

Once everyone arrives, we'll get down to picking teams.

38 get in on [x]

to join an activity

After the value of Bitcoin started going up, lots of people wanted to get in on cryptocurrency.

39 get into [x]

to discuss something thoroughly

I don't want to get into our finances now; we'll talk after our guests leave.

40 get [x] out of [x]

to take some benefit from a situation

Babysitting the Cohles was a nightmare, but at least Jabar got some money out of it.

41 get over [x]

to recover from or overcome something

Drinking a lot of water helps in getting over an illness.

42 get through [x]

to complete or endure an unpleasant experience

Alessandra can't get through a morning without coffee.

43 get to [x]

to annoy or bother someone

People who don't clean up after their dogs really get to me.

44 get together

to gather socially

The volleyball team is getting together for dinner after practice.

45 give [x] away

to donate something or give something for free

Mindy gave her prized doll collection away. / Mindy gave away her prized doll collection.

46 give up

to accept defeat, quit, or surrender

Carin felt like giving up every time she saw the scoreboard.

47 give [x] up

to stop consuming or doing something, often a habit

Minh gave chocolate up because of his migraines. / Minh gave up chocolate because of his migraines.

48 go against [x]

to disobey, contradict, oppose, or fight something

A group of students went against the school dress code yesterday and wore ripped jeans.

49 go ahead

to proceed or move forward

Because of the snow, we can't go ahead with the festival.

50 go along with [x]

to agree with or pretend to agree with

Even though Cedric hated weightlifting, he went along with it because his coach suggested it.

51 go for [x]

to try to achieve something

Carlos trains so hard because he is going for an Olympic gold medal.

52 go on

to continue

The workers will go on digging until they hit a water pipe.

53 go over [x]

to review or look at something

Marie went over the study guide one last time before the test.

54 hand in [x]

to submit something, especially an assignment

The teacher wants us to hand in our essays by email.

55 hold [x] back

to prevent someone from doing something

I wanted to become an architect, but my bad grades held me back.

56 keep [x] up

to continue doing something

Keep this pace up and you'll set a new record!

57 leave [x] out

to omit something

Orna left the graph out of the presentation. / Orna left out the graph from the presentation.

58 let [x] down

to disappoint someone

Kamal let Marco down when he arrived late. / Kamal let down Marco when he arrived late.

59 let go of [x]

to release or free something

Don't let go of the rope until I'm safe.

60 let [x] in

to allow something or someone to enter

Close the door or you'll let the flies in! / Close the door or you'll let in the flies!

61 let [x] know

to tell someone something

Let me know as soon as Leslie texts back.

62 look after [x]

to take care of someone or something

Thank you for looking after me when I was sick.

63 look up to [x]

to admire or idolize someone

I looked up to this YouTuber until I read about their scandal.

64 mix up [x]

to confuse two or more things with one another

It's easy to mix up Chris Pine and Chris Pratt.

65 pull [x] up

to retrieve or bring something nearer

Eugene pulled the document up on his computer. / Eugene pulled up the document on his computer.

66 put [x] on

to dress oneself in

I always put my backpack on before leaving the house. / I always put on my backpack before leaving the house.

67 put up with [x]

to tolerate or condone something

Somehow Paz could put up with Janice's cynical attitude.

68 run out of [x]

to use all of or drain the supply of something

Isabella ran out of toilet paper at the worst possible time.

69 see to [x]

to make sure something is done

I'll see to watering the plants while you're gone.

70 set [x] up

to arrange or organize something

Since no one had invited me to join their study group, I set a group up myself. / Since no one had invited me to join their study group, I set up a group myself.

71 show off

to display abilities or accomplishments in order to impress others

Panya didn't need to shoot so many three-pointers; she was just showing off.

72 shut [x] off

to turn off, especially a machine

Don't forget to shut the water off after your shower. / Don't forget to shut off the water after your shower.

73 take after [x]

to resemble someone, especially of children about their parents

Li takes after his father when it comes to politics.

74 take [x] out

to move something outside

Please take the garbage out before dinner. / Please take out the garbage before dinner.

75 think [x] over

to consider something

When his parents suggested selling his Pokémon cards, Yosef thought the idea over. / When his parents suggested selling his Pokémon cards, Yosef thought over the idea.

76 throw [x] away

to dispose of something

Could you throw that old burrito away? / Could you throw away that old burrito?

77 top [x] off

to refill something to the top; to complete something in a special or spectacular way

May I top your beverage off? / May I top off your beverage?

78 turn [x] down

to reject or say no to someone

My crush turned me down after I asked them out.

79 wait on [x]

to serve someone, especially at a restaurant

Billie eagerly waited on the table of new customers, hoping for a big tip.

80 wait out

to wait until an even to or period is over

They decided to wait out the rain before going on a walk.