



# 50 PHRASAL VERBS

## to expand your vocabulary



### 1. back out

Meaning: to decide not to do something that you had said you would do

Examples:

- *He agreed to come, then backed out at the last minute.*
- *They backed out of the deal the day before they were due to sign the contract.*

Try using it:



### 2. boss sb around

Meaning: to tell somebody what to do in an aggressive and/or annoying way

Examples:

- *I'm sick of you bossing me around!*
- *Five-year-olds love to boss people around.*

Try using it:



### 3. break up

Meaning: no longer be heard clearly when you are talking on the phone

Examples:

- *Sorry, you're breaking up. Could you say that again?*
- *The receptionist was breaking up, I didn't catch what she was saying.*

Try using it:



### 4. bump sth up

Meaning: to increase or raise something

Examples:

- *Prices were bumped up by 10 percent last week.*
- *Good use of vocabulary and grammar will help you bump up your exam score.*

Try using it:



## 5. catch on

Meaning: to become fashionable or popular

Examples:

- *The idea of glasses being a fashion item has been slow to catch on.*
- *He invented a new game, but it never really caught on.*

Try using it:



## 6. catch up on sth

Meaning: to spend extra time doing something because you have not done it earlier

Examples:

- *I've got a lot of work to catch up on.*
- *I need to catch up on some sleep.*

Try using it:



## 7. cash in on sth

Meaning: to gain an advantage for yourself from a situation, especially in a way that other people think is wrong

Examples:

- *The film studio is being accused of cashing in on the singer's death.*
- *Miller can cash in on her basketball talent by advertising athletic shoes.*

Try using it:



## 8. chat sb up

Meaning: talk in a friendly way to somebody you are sexually attracted to, perhaps hoping to start a relationship with them

Examples:

- *She went straight over and tried to chat him up.*
- *"You're not trying to chat me up, are you?"*

Try using it:



## 9. chip (sth) in

Meaning: to give some money when several people are giving money to pay for something together

Examples:

- *They all chipped in £100 and bought their mother a trip to Greece.*
- *We all chipped in to buy Amy a graduation present.*

Try using it:



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## 10. chip in

Meaning: to interrupt a conversation by saying something that adds more detail

Examples:

- *I'll start and you can all chip in with your comments.*
- *Pete and Anne chipped in with suggestions.*

Try using it:



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## 11. come across

Meaning: to make a particular impression

Examples:

- *She comes across well in interviews.*
- *He comes across as a very quiet person.*

Try using it:



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## 12. count sb in

Meaning: to include somebody in an activity

Examples:

- *'There's a party on Saturday.' – 'Count me in!'*
- *"Do you want to go swimming with us tomorrow?" "Yes, count me in."*

Try using it:



### 13. do sb in

Meaning: to make someone extremely tired

Examples:

- *That five-mile hike did me in.*
- *Come and sit down—you look done in.*

Try using it:

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### 14. do sth up

Meaning: to fasten a coat, skirt, etc.

Examples:

- *He never bothers to do his jacket up.*
- *Do your shoelaces up before you trip over.*

Try using it:



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### 15. do sth up

Meaning: to repair or decorate a building so that it looks attractive

Examples:

- *He makes money by buying old houses and doing them up.*
- *I'd like to buy a run-down house and do it up.*

Try using it:



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### 16. drop sb off

Meaning: take someone or something to a place by car and leave them there on your way.

Examples:

- *"I'll drop you off on my way home."*
- *"Can you drop the kids off at school this morning?"*

Try using it:



### 17. factor sth in

Meaning: to include a particular fact or situation when you are thinking about or planning something

Examples:

- *You have to factor in the long-term cost of carbon pollution.*
- *Remember to factor in staffing costs when you are planning the project*

Try using it:



### 18. fall for sth

Meaning: to be tricked into believing something that is not true

Examples:

- *He told me he owned a mansion in Spain and I fell for it.*
- *He is too smart to fall for that trick.*

Try using it:



### 19. get away with (doing) sth

Meaning: to not be caught or punished when you have done something wrong

Examples:

- *If I thought I could get away with it, I wouldn't pay my taxes at all.*
- *No one insults my family and gets away with it!*

Try using it:



### 20. get on/along (with sb)

Meaning: to have a good relationship

Examples:

- *She doesn't get on well with her father.*
- *She's never really got on with her sister.*

Try using it:



## 21. keep sth down

Meaning: used to ask someone to make less noise

Examples:

- *Keep your voice down – she'll hear you!*
- *Can you keep it down – I'm trying to work.*

Try using it:



## 22. keep sth down

Meaning: to succeed in keeping food in your stomach, instead of bringing it up again out of your mouth, when you are ill

Examples:

- *I could hardly keep anything down for about three days.*
- *She's had some water but she can't keep any food down.*

Try using it:



## 23. keep sth up

Meaning: to continue something at the same, usually high, level

Examples:

- *We're having difficulty keeping up our mortgage payments.*
- *Well done! Keep up the good work!*

Try using it:



## 24. knock sb up

Meaning: to make a woman pregnant (slang)

Examples:

- *You don't want to get knocked up by some guy you hardly know.*
- *She got knocked up on her honeymoon.*

Try using it:



## 25. knock sth up

Meaning: to prepare or make something quickly and without much effort

Examples:

- *She knocked up a meal in ten minutes.*
- *I knocked up some pasta and a beef casserole*

Try using it:



## 26. listen in on sb

Meaning: to listen to someone's conversation when the person does not realize you are doing it

Examples:

- *She thinks her boss is listening in on her phone conversations.*
- *I wasn't trying to listen in on their argument, but they were speaking so loudly that it was impossible not to.*

Try using it:



## 27. listen up

Meaning: listen carefully (used to get people's attention)

Examples:

- *Hey everybody, listen up!*
- *The instructions are complicated so listen up.*

Try using it:



## 28. look sth up

Meaning: to look for information in a dictionary, reference book or online

Examples:

- *I don't know what this word means, I'll have to look it up.*
- *I decided to look him up on social media before our first date.*

Try using it:





### 29. make sth out

Meaning: to see, hear, or understand something or someone with difficulty

Examples:

- *I can't make out your writing.*
- *I could hear voices but I couldn't make out what they were saying.*

Try using it:



### 30. make sth up

Meaning: to invent something, such as an excuse or a story, often in order to deceive

Examples:

- *He made up some excuse about his daughter being sick.*
- *I told the kids a story, making it up as I went along.*

Try using it:



### 31. nip out (to a place)

Meaning: leave a place for a very short time.

Examples:

- *"I'm going to nip out to the shops to get some bread".*
- *"She's just nipped out to the bank. She'll be back in a minute".*

Try using it:



### 32. pick sb up

Meaning: to go and get someone or something

Examples:

- *"When you're in town could you pick up the books I ordered?"*
- *"It's my turn to pick the children up after school".*

Try using it:



### 33. pick sth up

Meaning: to learn a new skill or language by practising it rather than being taught it

Examples:

- *She picked up Spanish when she was living in Mexico.*
- *Don't bother with the computer manual – you'll pick it up as you go along.*

Try using it:



### 34. pop in(to) (a place)

Meaning: visit briefly and unexpectedly.

Examples:

- *“Why don't you pop in and see us this afternoon?”*
- *“I need to pop into the office to pick up some documents”.*

Try using it:



### 35. set off

Meaning: start a journey, start going in a particular direction.

Examples:

- *“We set off for London just after ten.”*
- *“I'll set off early to avoid the traffic”.*

Try using it:



### 36. sink in

Meaning: (of words, an event, etc.) to be fully understood or realized)

Examples:

- *The full scale of the disaster has yet to sink in.*
- *He paused for a moment for his words to sink in.*

Try using it:



### 37. sleep in

Meaning: to sleep until later in the morning than you usually do

Examples:

- *I usually sleep in on Saturdays.*
- *I think I'll go to bed late tonight and sleep in tomorrow.*

Try using it:



### 38. sleep sth off

Meaning: to get better after something, especially drinking too much alcohol, by sleeping

Examples:

- *I have spent the day at home sleeping off a bad cold and the accompanying cough.*
- *Let's leave him to sleep it off.*

Try using it:



### 39. snap up

Meaning: to buy something immediately, especially because it is very cheap

Examples:

- *People rush to snap up new Apple gadgets.*
- *If you see a computer for under £400, you should snap it up.*

Try using it:



### 40. snap out of sth

Meaning: to stop being sad or upset and make yourself feel better

Examples:

- *She's been depressed for days. I wish she'd snap out of it.*
- *He just can't snap out of the depression he's had since his wife died.*

Try using it:



#### 41. swear by sth

Meaning: to be certain that something is good or useful

Examples:

- *She swears by meditation as a way of relieving stress.*
- *He swears by vitamin C pills.*

Try using it:



#### 42. swing by (a place)

Meaning: visit a place quickly, especially on your way to another place.

Examples:

- *"I'll swing by after work to drop off the paperwork".*
- *"I told him I'd swing by his place around 7.30".*

Try using it:



#### 43. talk sb into (doing) sth

Meaning: to persuade someone to do something

Examples:

- *I didn't want to move abroad but my friends talked me into it.*
- *I can't believe he talked me into lending him my car for the weekend.*

Try using it:



#### 44. talk sb out of (doing) sth

Meaning: to persuade someone not to do something

Examples:

- *Her parents tried to talk her out of getting engaged.*
- *My mother tried to talk me out of getting a dog.*

Try using it:



#### 45. talk sb through sth

Meaning: to explain an idea, a plan, etc. to someone so that they understand it

Examples:

- *"Can you talk me through the proposal?"*
- *"I called customer service, and the guy talked me through installing the software"*

Try using it:



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#### 46. wait sth out

Meaning: to wait until an unpleasant event has finished

Examples:

- *Let's find a place where we can wait out the storm.*
- *It is better to stay calm and wait out the tantrum than to get angry and punish the child's behaviour.*

Try using it:



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#### 47. wear sb out

Meaning: to make someone extremely tired

Examples:

- *The kids have totally worn me out.*
- *You'll wear yourself out if you carry on working so hard.*

Try using it:



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#### 48. whip up

Meaning: to make food or a meal very quickly and easily

Examples:

- *I have just enough time to whip up an omelette.*
- *He whipped up some salad dressing in the kitchen.*

Try using it:



## 49. wind down

Meaning: to rest or relax after a period of activity or excitement

Examples:

- *Friday afternoons were for easing up and winding down.*
- *When he goes on holiday, it takes him the first couple of days just to wind down.*

Try using it:



## 50. wind sb up

Meaning: to deliberately say or do something that will annoy or worry someone, as a joke

Examples:

- *She just knows how to wind me up.*
- *Calm down! Can't you see he's only winding you up?*

Try using it:



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