

THE MOST COMMON BUSINESS
IDIOMS
&
PHRASAL VERBS

200 PHRASES YOU NEED TO KNOW IN
BUSINESS ENGLISH

Dear English Learners,

Welcome to a sample of the book: *The Most Common Business Idioms and Phrasal Verbs*. My goal with this book is to help you learn real everyday Business English language so that you can achieve success in the professional business world. The pages in this sample book are taken directly from the complete book. In this sample, you can find the following parts:

- The table of contents pages, which describe the contents of the book
- An explanation about phrasal verbs and transitive separable phrasal verbs
- 5 sample lessons (5 phrasal verbs) with explanations and examples for each one
- A review page to show you the practice exercises that are included

Please note that the review section in this book is for the whole section of “out” phrasal verbs, which includes 14 lessons (see table of contents).

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PHRASAL VERBS

Phrasal Verbs Introduction

Before you begin this book and start learning the meaning of various business phrasal verbs, it's important to understand a few key points so that you can use these phrasal verbs correctly. The mistake that many teachers make is only giving a definition or meaning of a phrasal verb without explaining the complex aspects of phrasal verbs that are necessary to understand so that you can use them correctly.

If phrasal verbs are only taught with a simple definition, then students tend to use them incorrectly. Often this mistake is related to grammar because phrasal verbs are *verbs*, and verbs are more complicated grammatically than nouns.

I am confident that this book will help you not only learn the meaning of these common business phrasal verbs but more importantly it will help you use them correctly in both speaking and writing.

With all phrasal verbs, if you want to use them correctly, you must know the answers to a few questions, which are given below. If you've never thought about these questions when learning phrasal verbs in the past, you are probably using some of those phrasal verbs incorrectly, but don't worry – we'll fix this and ensure that you use them correctly from now on!

5 Questions to Consider When Learning Phrasal Verbs

What is the meaning/definition of the phrasal verb?

Obviously, the starting point is to know the meaning of a phrasal verb. Some phrasal verbs have meanings that are easy to understand because they are synonyms of other verbs, such as "give up" and "quit".

However, there are many phrasal verbs that do not have this kind of exact synonym and these phrasal verbs are more challenging to understand. For example, the phrasal verb "end up" does not have an exact synonym. In this case, a good explanation of the phrasal verb's meaning is even more important.

Is the phrasal verb transitive (has a direct object) or intransitive (doesn't have a direct object)?

When you learn that a verb is transitive, it means that the verb must include an object directly after it, such as "like", "buy", and "need": "*she likes books*", "*I bought a product*", and "*the children need help*." You cannot say these verbs without an object, so it's incorrect to say: "*she likes*", "*I bought*" or "*the children need*" without any object. With transitive verbs, even if the person knows the object, you still need to use a pronoun like "it" or "them" because these verbs need an object: "*she likes them*", "*I bought it*", "*the children need it*."

There are transitive phrasal verbs too, which means that these phrasal verbs must have an object with them in the same way as "like", "buy", and "need". An example is "fill out": "*I filled out the form*."

On the other hand, some verbs are intransitive and can be used without any object, such as "wait", "listen", and "participate": "*she waited*", "*I listened*", "*the children participated*." If you want to add an object to an intransitive verb, you must add a preposition: "*she waited for the bus*", "*I listened to music*", "*the children participated in the game*."

There are intransitive phrasal verbs too, which means that these phrasal verbs must have an extra preposition added after the phrasal verb when you are adding an object. An example is the phrasal verb "reach out": "*thanks for reaching out*", or "*thanks for reaching out to me*."

If the phrasal verb is transitive, what kind of object does it have?

As you learned in the previous section, when a verb or phrasal verb is transitive, you need to know what kind of object it has. For example, when you use the verb "eat", you know that the object is probably going to be a type of food. It's common to say: "*she ate pizza*", but it's incorrect to say: "*she ate thirty minutes*" because the object "*thirty minutes*" does not make sense as the object of this verb.

The same is true with phrasal verbs – it's important to know what kind of object is most common and natural with the phrasal verb. For example, when you use the transitive phrasal verb “fill out”, it's useful to know that the most common object is a document or form: “I filled out the form.”

If the phrasal verb is *transitive*, is it separable or not?

When a verb or phrasal verb is transitive and has an object, the object can sometimes be put in the middle of the phrasal verb, such as “I filled the form out”. These phrasal verbs are called *separable* phrasal verbs, and “fill out” is one example of a separable phrasal verb.

On the other hand, some phrasal verbs cannot be separated, and the object must always be at the end, such as “they have to deal with the problem.” The phrasal verb “deal with” is transitive but it *cannot* be separated.

If the phrasal verb is *intransitive* and you want to add an object, what is the extra preposition that you need?

As you learned earlier, if a verb or phrasal verb is intransitive, it needs an extra preposition added with the object, such as the preposition “for” with the intransitive verb “wait” to describe why you are waiting: “I'm waiting for my friend.”

With intransitive phrasal verbs, you need to remember which preposition to add with an object. In the example of the phrasal verb “reach out”, the extra preposition is “to” to describe who you are contacting: “I reached out to the customer.”

How This Book Can Help

It might seem like there are too many things to think about when learning phrasal verbs, but this book will make the process simpler and easier by organizing phrasal verbs into the following categories:

1. Transitive/Separable: phrasal verbs that must have an object and the object can be in the middle.
2. Transitive/Inseparable: phrasal verbs that must have an object and the object is always at the end.
3. Intransitive: phrasal verbs that are used without an object and need an extra preposition to add an object.
4. Three-word: phrasal verbs that always have three words together (ex. “come up with”).
5. Other: there are only 5 phrasal verbs in this book that do not fit into the four previous categories.

In addition to organizing phrasal verbs by category, you'll also find that the phrasal verbs are organized based on their preposition/adverb.

For instance, in the “*Transitive Separable*” category, all the phrasal verbs with “out” are together (ex. “carry out”, “fill out”, “sort out”, etc.) to make it easier to remember. By organizing the phrasal verbs into groups that have the same preposition, you can focus on remembering just the verb.

As an example, if you are learning about phrasal verbs that use the preposition “out” in the “*Transitive Separable*” section, you know that all of the phrasal verbs in this section will end with “out” so you can focus your energy on remembering the verbs (ex. “carry”, “fill”, and “sort”). This is much easier than trying to remember random combinations of verbs and prepositions that are all different.

Transitive & Separable Phrasal Verbs

Introduction to Transitive Separable Phrasal Verbs

The first section of this book is focused on phrasal verbs that have two important features: they are transitive, and they are separable. Both of these points will be described below.

Transitive

A transitive verb is one that *must* have an object, even if the object is the pronoun “it” or “them”. There are many regular verbs (not phrasal verbs) that are transitive, such as “like”, “use”, and “find”. When you use these transitive verbs, there is always an object (noun) attached to them. You can see the difference between the correct use of a transitive verb and the incorrect use of one below:

- *“I tried sushi for the first time and I really liked!”* – incorrect because “like” doesn’t have an object
- *“I tried sushi for the first time and I really liked it!”* – correct because “like” has an object (“it”)
- *“My friend lent me some tools, but I didn’t use.”* – incorrect because “use” doesn’t have an object
- *“My friend lent me some tools, but I didn’t use them.”* – correct because “use” has an object (“them”)
- *“I was looking for my bag and hat. Luckily, I found.”* – incorrect because “found” doesn’t have an object
- *“I was looking for my bag and hat. Luckily, I found the bag and the hat.”* – correct because “found” has objects (“the bag and the hat”)

The same is true for transitive *phrasal verbs* – they need an object. One example of a transitive phrasal verb that you will learn in this section is “fill (something) out”, which means “to complete a document”. When you use this phrasal verb, you need to include the object, which is usually a document.

- *“She gave me an application form, but I didn’t fill out.”* – incorrect because there isn’t an object
- *“She gave me an application form, but I didn’t fill out the form.”* – correct because there *is* an object

When you learn transitive phrasal verbs, it’s especially important to pay attention to what kind of object the phrasal verb uses, because a transitive phrasal verb always needs an object, so in this section of the book, remember to focus on the type of object that each one uses. As mentioned earlier, in the case of “fill out”, the object is usually a document or form.

Separable

A separable phrasal verb is one where the object can be in the middle of the two words of the phrasal verb. The phrasal verb “fill out” is a separable phrasal verb, so the words “fill” and “out” can be separated and the object can be in the middle. Or, the object can also be at the end of the phrasal verb. Basically, it can be written two ways:

- *“I filled out the application form.”* – correct, with the object “application form” at the end
- *“I filled the application form out.”* – correct with the object “application form” in the middle

Although this seems easy because you can use it both ways, it becomes more difficult when the object is a *pronoun*. If the object is a pronoun, it *must* be in the middle of two phrasal verb words. Pronouns include words like “it”, “them”, “him”, “her”, “us”, “me”, “you”, “this”, and “that”.

If you use a pronoun like “it” as the object of “fill out”, it becomes “fill it out”. It cannot be “fill out it”.

- *“I received a document and filled out it.”* – incorrect because the pronoun is at the end
- *“I received a document and filled it out.”* – correct because the pronoun is in the middle

It’s important to remember that these phrasal verbs are separable because it’s common to use a pronoun as the object when the person you are talking to already knows the object. For example, if someone gives you a form at the doctor’s office, it might seem awkward to say: “I’ll fill out this form” because it’s already obvious to the other person that you are talking about a form. It’s much more natural to just say: “I’ll fill it out.”

Another example of a transitive separable phrasal verb is “sort out”. Even if you don’t know the meaning of “sort out” yet, you can determine the correct examples below by knowing that it’s a *transitive separable* verb.

Identify which of the sentences below are correct for the transitive separable phrasal verb “sort out” by following the rules of transitive separable phrasal verbs mentioned on the previous page:

- a) *“There was a small problem, but we were able to sort out the problem.”*
- b) *“There was a small problem, but we were able to sort the problem out.”*
- c) *“There was a small problem, but we were able to sort out.”*
- d) *“There was a small problem, but we were able to sort it out.”*
- e) *“There was a small problem, but we were able to sort out it.”*

Hint: there are only three correct answers. You can find the answers at the bottom of this page.

The correct answers are a), b), and d). Example a) is correct because the object is a regular noun and it’s at the end. Example b) is correct because the object is a regular noun and it’s in the middle (remember that a regular noun can be either in the middle or at the end of a separable phrasal verb). Example d) is correct because the object is a pronoun and it’s in the middle (remember that a pronoun can only be in the middle).

OUT

1. Carry (a task) out

Meaning: to perform a task until it's completed

If you receive an assignment and perform it until it's completed, you can say: *"I carried out the assignment."*

The phrasal verb "carry out" can be used instead of "perform" or "do" with a task. For example, you can say: *"my manager wants me to do this research"* but you can also say: *"my manager wants me to carry out this research."*

The subject is the person who performs the task, and the object is the task. Common objects include the words *task, research, project, experiment, assessment, assignment, inspection, investigation, review, study, and survey.*

Examples:

- *The police are going to carry out an investigation to find out why the accident happened.*
- *Our marketing department is carrying out a survey to identify consumer preferences.*
- *We need to find someone to carry out the project for us.*

2. Fill (a document) out

Meaning: to complete a document by entering all the necessary information

If you give someone a document and you want them to enter all the necessary information to complete that document, you can say: *"please fill this document out."*

The subject is the person who writes the information, and the object is the document. Common objects include the words *form, document, application, section, and page.*

Examples:

- *I just need you to fill this form out before the doctor sees you.*
- *I would like to apply for travel insurance. Do I need to fill a form out to apply?*
- *Did my credit card application get approved? I filled it out two weeks ago.*

3a. Work (numbers) out

Meaning: to calculate numbers to get a final answer

If you want to calculate the numbers related to the costs of a project, you can say: *"I want to work out the costs."* In this case, the "costs" are the numbers that you are calculating.

It's common to use this phrasal verb when doing math to get a final answer for something involving numbers. For example, if your manager wants to know how much it will cost him to increase everyone's wage by \$2/hour, you can say: *"I'll work it out"* which means you will calculate the numbers related to this change and get an answer.

The subject is the person who does calculations, and the object is related to numbers. Common objects include the words *numbers, figures, costs, and budget.*

Examples:

- *We're not sure yet if it's a good investment or not. We still need to work out the figures.*
- *Let me work the costs out for the project and then I can give you a quote for it.*
- *I worked out the numbers for the sponsorship proposal, and it looks like a good idea to proceed.*

3b. Work (an agreement) out

Meaning: to find an agreement that is good for everyone

If two companies are negotiating a contract and trying to find an agreement that is good for both sides, you can say: *“they are trying to work out a deal.”* The phrasal verb “work out” implies a positive result.

The subject is the people who agree, and the object is the agreement. Common objects include the words *deal*, *compromise*, *agreement*, and *solution*. It’s also common to use the noun “something” to represent a solution in the situation: *“I think we can work something out.”*

Examples:

- *The company and the workers union were able to work out an agreement to avoid a labour strike.*
- *I need to work out a new contract with our suppliers. The old contract expired.*
- *I know that our client is unhappy with the mistake. Try to work something out to satisfy him so that he doesn’t go to our competitor. Maybe we can offer some free additional services for him.*

4. Sort (a problem) out

Meaning: to resolve a problem, dispute, or unorganized situation

If you accidentally scheduled two appointments at the same time but then resolved the problem by changing one of the appointments to a different time, you can say: *“I sorted the problem out.”*

You can also use this phrasal verb for resolving misunderstandings, conflicts, or other situations when things are not the way that they should be.

The subject is the person who resolves the problem, and the object is the problem or negative situation. Common objects include the words *problem*, *issue*, and *mess*.

Examples:

- *The hotel maintenance department is trying to sort out the issue with the hot water as quickly as possible.*
- *Did the restaurant manager sort out the problem with the menu yet? I asked her to add vegetarian items for some of our vegetarian guests and she said she would sort it out.*
- *We cannot launch the product until the packaging problem is sorted out. The original packaging was too difficult to open so some new packaging is being developed.*

5. Phase (a process) out

Meaning: to gradually discontinue a process, system, project, or service (not in one immediate action)

When you don’t want to change a whole process suddenly at one time, you can say that you will phase out the old process, which means you will do it gradually.

For example, if your company wants to replace an old computer system with a new one, you might prefer to do this gradually in a step-by-step process over a period of time. In this case, you can say: *“we are going to phase the old computer system out.”*

The preposition “over” can be added to explain the duration of the phase out process: *“we will phase it out over the next six months.”*

The subject is a company or management team, and the object is usually a process, system, project, or service.

Examples:

- *The company is phasing out in-person training courses and replacing them with online courses.*
- *Our old loyalty program is being phased out and replaced with a better program with more rewards.*
- *Many airlines have successfully phased out their free baggage-check process. Originally, people could check two bags for free, and then it was only one bag for free, and now passengers must pay for all bags that they check with the airline.*

Review

1. Create the phrasal verbs with “out” by putting the verb in the blank to match with the definition.

find / roll / figure / work (x2) / carry / point / buy

- a) _____ (noun) out: to find an agreement after a discussion
 b) _____ (noun) out: to learn or discover information from a source
 c) _____ (noun) out: to perform a task until it is completed
 d) _____ (noun) out: to acquire control of another company by buying over 50% of their shares
 e) _____ (noun) out: to discover a correct solution or answer by thinking about it
 f) _____ (noun) out: to release a product, service, or process in stages (not all at one time)
 g) _____ (noun) out: to mention something that is important so that other people notice it
 h) _____ (noun) out: to calculate numbers to get a final answer

buy / iron / sort / contract / fill / phase / try / lay

- i) _____ (noun) out: to outsource part of a company’s operations to another business
 j) _____ (noun) out: to use a product temporarily to discover whether it’s good or not
 k) _____ (noun) out: to gradually discontinue a process (not in one immediate action)
 l) _____ (noun) out: to pay an amount of money to a person in order to terminate something
 m) _____ (noun) out: to complete a situation by resolving any remaining issues, differences, or details
 n) _____ (noun) out: to complete a document by entering information
 o) _____ (noun) out: to explain detailed information clearly and carefully so that others can understand
 p) _____ (noun) out: to try to resolve a problem or dispute

2. Match the phrasal verb with its common object:

fill out / find out / roll out / lay out / iron out / buy out (x2) / point out

- a) _____ a company
 b) _____ a document
 c) _____ a person
 d) _____ information
 e) _____ a plan
 f) _____ a mistake
 g) _____ final details
 h) _____ a new product

figure out / phase out / work out (x2) / try out / carry out / contract out / sort out

- i) _____ a task
 j) _____ an agreement
 k) _____ an answer or a solution
 l) _____ a problem

- m) _____ an operation
- n) _____ a number (as part of a calculation)
- o) _____ a process
- p) _____ a product

3. Read each sentence 1 - 7 and try to decide which future action each person is talking about (a – g).

1. We don't need their service anymore but there is still a month in their contract. We should buy them out.
2. The report lays out where the company's biggest future opportunities exist.
3. We are almost done. We have a meeting tomorrow to iron out a few points of the contract.
4. I think it's better to roll the product out so that we can fix any problems that we discover on a small scale.
5. I'm not exactly sure about that. Let me find out for you.
6. The company intends to buy out its rival so that it can strengthen its position in the market.
7. Please ensure that all employees fill out this form.
8. I want to point out column B on the chart. It shows you the projected figures for next year.

- a) Complete a document
- b) Receive some information from a source
- c) Finalize remaining details to complete a process
- d) Pay someone money to terminate their contract
- e) Explain detailed information clearly and carefully so that people can understand it
- f) Identify and get people's attention towards something
- g) Pay money to a company to take the controlling ownership of that company
- h) Release something in stages

4. Replace the underlined part of the sentence with the appropriate phrasal verb from this lesson. Remember that these phrasal verbs are separable, so if you use a pronoun as the object of the phrasal verb (like "it" or "them"), that pronoun needs to be in the middle of the phrasal verb.

- a) The Marketing Department is going to perform a survey to collect feedback.
- b) Please take this document, complete it and bring it back to me here.
- c) There's a problem at one of our factories. I have to go there tonight to resolve it.
- d) We should stop using the old CRM system gradually.
- e) I'd like to emphasize that these sales figures do not include the past two weeks.
- f) During his presentation, the CEO explained clearly and carefully the company's goals for the next year.
- g) We should release the new online reservation system step-by-step.
- h) The company is going to hire an external company for recruitment.
- i) The management decided to pay extra money to him to end his contract.
- j) My co-worker and I had a disagreement about our project, but we resolved it.
- k) The job is mostly done. I just need to finalize the minor remaining details.
- l) I checked the employee attendance record and I learned that he's missed ten days this year.
- m) A few numbers in the estimate were wrong, but I discovered a solution and fixed it.
- n) If you're interested in that product, you can use it and see if you like it or not.
- o) I think it's best if we present the plans to staff soon to avoid any false rumours from spreading.