

File: ELSBO_Phrasal_Verbs_20260210

Date: Tuesday, February 10th, 2026

Appendix P5 - Phrasal Verbs.

Phrasal Verbs - A phrasal verb is a verb made of two or more words:

Structure: a main verb + a particle (a preposition or adverb).

Question: What is its purpose?

Answer:

A phrasal verb exists for a very specific reason: it lets English speakers express complex actions, ideas, or changes in meaning using a simple verb + a small particle (like up, out, off, in, over)

Purpose of a Phrasal Verb:

1. To create a new meaning

The particle changes the verb's meaning—often in a way that a single verb cannot express as naturally.

- *take off* = remove clothing OR leave the ground
- *give up* = quit
- *look after* = take care of

2. To make everyday English more natural

Native speakers use phrasal verbs constantly in conversation. They sound more natural than their formal equivalents.

- *continue* → *carry on*
- *enter* → *go in*
- *discover* → *find out*

3. To express idiomatic, informal, or nuanced ideas

Phrasal verbs often carry emotional tone, attitude, or subtle meaning.

- *calm down*
- *cheer up*
- *back off*

4. To allow flexibility in sentence structure

Particles can sometimes move, which helps with emphasis.

- *Pick up the book.*
- *Pick the book up.*

This movement shows the particle is part of the verb, not a preposition.

Common Phrasal Verbs (High-Frequency)

- get up – rise from bed sit down – take a seat
- stand up – rise to your feet
- turn on – activate
- turn off – deactivate
- pick up – lift or collect
- put down – place something
- look for – search
- look after – take care of
- give up – quit
- find out – discover
- come back – return
- go out – leave home for social activity
- take off – remove or depart
- check in – register
- check out – leave or examine