# Phrasal verbs

This is a list of some common English phrasal verbs. Note that it ISN'T a complete list – there are always more to learn! And some of these have additional meanings not listed here.

For more information on structure, see the grammar rule.

### Intransitive verbs -- verbs that don't take an object

| Verb | Meaning | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| add up | to seem reasonable or likely | James said he was at a meeting when the money was stolen, but the police said his story didn't add up. |
| blow up | to suddenly become very angry | The boss blew up when we told him we'd lost the contract. |
| break down | to fail because of a problem or disagreement (a relationship or discussion, etc.) | Unfortunately, the negotiations broke down on the second day. |
| break down | to stop working (a machine or vehicle) | Sorry I'm late – my car broke down. |
| break off | to suddenly stop talking | She was complaining to a colleague but broke off when her boss walked in. |
| butt in | to interrupt someone who is talking | I was trying to explain something to Carla but Simon kept butting in. |
| call in | to briefly and informally visit someone | Why don't you call in on your way home from work? |
| carry on | to continue an activity | I need to leave. Can you carry on without me? |
| catch on | to become fashionable or popular | It's an unusual product but we hope it will catch on! |
| catch up | to reach someone or something by moving faster than them | She's running too fast – I can't catch up with her. |
| catch up | to do something you should have done earlier | I'm going to try to catch up with my emails today – I've got 150 in my inbox! |
| catch up | to reach the same standard as someone or something else | I don't think our company will ever catch up with the innovations of Japanese manufacturers. |
| close down | to permanently stop operating [a business] | The shop closed down because it wasn't getting enough customers. |
| come to | to regain consciousness | When I came to after the operation, I didn't know where I was! |
| come across | to behave in a way that makes people believe you have a particular characteristic | I hope I didn't come across as too serious. |
| come out | to be published, or become available for people to buy or see [a book, magazine, film, etc.] | When does their new catalogue come out? |
| come up | to be mentioned or talked about in conversation, perhaps unexpectedly | Which points came up at the meeting |

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| cut back | to spend, do or use less of something | If exercise is causing you pain, you should cut back. |
| cut down | to do or use less of something | He eats too much sugar – he needs to cut down. |
| dress up | to wear formal or special clothes for a particular occasion | There's no need to dress up for the party – jeans will be fine. |
| dress up | to wear a special costume for fun | My children dressed up as vampires for Halloween. |
| drop by/in | to briefly and informally visit someone | My daughter's dropping by later so I'm making her favourite cake. |
| eat out | to eat in a restaurant | I'm too tired to cook; let's eat out tonight. |
| end up | to finally be in a place or situation | We couldn't get a table anywhere so we ended up ordering a pizza! |
| fall off | to become smaller or lower [amount, rate or quality of something] | Sales have been falling off recently. |
| find out | to get information because you want to know more about something | Can you find out when the next train leaves, please? |
| find out | to learn a fact for the first time | I just found out that Bill's leaving the company. |
| get about/around | to be able to go to different places without difficulty, perhaps if you are old or ill | It's easier to get around in this town now there are more buses.<br>My grandmother's finding it harder to get about these days. |
| get away | to leave or escape from a person or place, sometimes when it is difficult to do this | We walked to the next beach to get away from the crowds.<br>I worked through my lunch break so I can get away early tonight. |
| get away | to go somewhere to have a holiday, often because you need to rest | I just needed to get away for a few days, so we had a long weekend in Prague. |
| get back | to return | We got back from our holiday late last night. |
| get by | to be able to deal with a situation, but with difficulty because you only just have enough of what you need | We don't earn much money but we get by; we can't afford holidays but we always pay our bills! |
| get off | to leave a bus, train or plane, etc. | You need to get off at the next stop and change to Line B. |
| get off | to leave a place, usually in order to start a journey | Let's try to get off by 7.00, the roads will be clearer. |
| get off | to leave work, usually at the end of the day | What time can you get off this afternoon? It would be nice to go for a drink. |
| get off | to escape (severe) punishment for something that you have been accused of in court | He was accused of dangerous driving but got off with a £100 fine. |
| get on | to enter a bus, train or plane etc. | They got on the wrong bus and ended up in the town centre! |
| get on | to have a (good) relationship | She doesn't get on with her sister at all. |
| get on | to manage or deal with a situation, especially successfully | How are you getting on in your new job? |
| get on | to give your time to something and make progress with it, perhaps after stopping | I'll leave you to get on then, shall I?<br>We don't have all day to finish this job, so can we just get on with it, please? |

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| get up | to leave your bed after sleeping | I always get up later at the weekend. |
| get through | to succeed in talking to someone on the phone | I tried to call her but couldn't get through. |
| give in | to finally agree to what someone wants, after refusing for a period of time | OK, I give in! I don't agree with you but I don't have the energy to argue. |
| give up | to stop trying to do something before you have finished, usually because it is too difficult | I tried everything to fix it myself but no luck. So I gave up and called technical support. |
| go ahead | to start to do something | The management told us we can go ahead with the new system. |
| go on | to continue | Let's go on to the next item. |
| go without | to experience a lack or be deprived of something | I'm sorry but we've run out of sugar, so you'll have to go without for now. |
| hand over | to give someone else control of or responsibility for something | He decided to hand over to a new director. |
| hang on | to wait for a short time | We hung on for a while but Jack didn't turn up so we started without him. |
| hang up | to end a phone call | He started shouting so I hung up! |
| hold on | to tell someone to wait for a short time | Hold on, I'll just find out for you. |
| keep on | to do something repeatedly, or to persist | The phone just keeps on ringing today! If you keep on trying, I'm sure you'll succeed. |
| keep up | to stay level or equal with someone or something | You run too fast – I can't keep up! |
| keep up | to understand or deal with something that is happening or changing quickly | I can't keep up with new technology – as soon as I learn something new, something else changes. |
| kick off | to start [informal] | Our marketing campaign kicked off last week. |
| log in/on | to start using a computer system or program by giving a password | I can't log on – I've forgotten my password! |
| log out/off | to stop a computer being connected to a system or program, usually when you want to stop working | For security purposes, make sure you log off when you've finished. |
| look on | to watch something happen but not become involved in it | She looked on in surprise when her shy colleague stood up and spoke at a meeting for the first time. |
| look out | to be careful and take notice | Look out when you go in – there are some loose cables on the floor. |
| pick up | to increase or improve | Sales aren't good at the moment, but we expect things to pick up in the summer. |
| pop in | to briefly and informally visit someone | If you have time later, pop in for a coffee. |
| pull out | to stop being involved in an activity | A lack of funding leaves us with no choice but to pull out. |
| press on | to continue doing something in a determined way | Gerald could tell that the manager didn't like his suggestions but he pressed on anyway. |

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| run out | to finish, use or sell all of something, so that there is none left | I need to get more coffee – we've run out. |
| show off | to do something in order to attract attention or admiration, possibly something that others will find annoying | She bought that sports car just to show off. |
| show up | to arrive somewhere in order to join a group of people, especially late or unexpectedly | We told everyone it started at 7.00 but most of them didn't show up until after 9.00. |
| slow down | to reduce speed | You need to slow down as you approach the traffic lights. |
| slow down | to be less active and relax more | The doctor told him to slow down or he'd have a heart attack. |
| switch off | to stop giving your attention to someone or something | The presentation was so long that eventually I just switched off.<br>A lot of people in stressful jobs find it difficult to switch off when they get home. |
| take off | to suddenly start to be successful or popular | We were worried at the beginning of the year, but in March, sales really took off. |
| turn out | to happen in a particular way or to have a particular result, perhaps an unexpected one | The seminar turned out to be more enjoyable than we expected. |
| turn up | to arrive, either somewhere where people have been invited, or unexpectedly | How many people turned up at the meeting?<br>You'll never believe who turned up in my office yesterday – Tim! I haven't seen him for years. |
| turn in | to go to bed at the end of the day | I'm really tired; I think I'll turn in. |
| wake up | to become awake after sleeping | It's difficult to wake up on Mondays. |
| wear off | to gradually disappear [a feeling or effect] | The anaesthetic wears off after about an hour. |
| work out | to happen or develop in a particular way | I hope your new job works out well for you. |
| work out | to exercise in order to improve the strength or appearance of your body | You look great. Have you been working out? |

### Transitive verbs -- verbs that take an object

NOTE THAT two-word transitive phrasal verbs vary according to where the object can or cannot be placed. There are three groups:

#### Group 1

The object can be placed between the verb and the particle, OR after the verb and particle.

- I picked my friend up from the station. ✔

- I picked up my friend from the station.✔

Pronouns can only be used between the verb and the particle.

- I picked him up.✔
- I picked up him.✖

| Verb | Meaning | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| block something out | to arrange to have time for something by planning in advance | She blocked out an hour every day in her diary to talk to her team. |
| block something out | to prevent the ability to receive or remember something | Some people are able to block out every sound and distraction when they're working. |
| break something down | to separate something into several parts | To make it easier to understand the statistics, I'm going to break them down into clear and specific units. |
| bring something about | to cause something to happen | We're working hard to bring about some changes in the company. |
| bring something or someone in | to attract someone or something to a place or business | We're hoping that the price reductions will bring more customers in. The new sales team has brought in a lot of new business. |
| bring something or someone in | to introduce something or someone new, often a law or a product | The government has brought in new tax rules.<br>The company's getting bigger so we're bringing in an additional senior manager. |
| bring something off | to succeed in doing something difficult | Terry was nervous about giving the presentation but he brought it off without any problems. |
| bring something up | to introduce a topic in order to discuss it | We need some better equipment – let's bring that up at the next meeting. |
| buy someone or something out | to buy a part of a company or building from someone else so that you own all of it | The bank announced that it wanted to buy out the publicly owned shares of its stock. The group owns most of the five-storey building, and now they want to buy out the owner of the second floor. |
| call something off | to cancel an event or activity | They decided to call off the match because of the weather. |
| carry something out | to do or complete something, especially that you have said you would do or that you have been told to do | We're carrying out tests to find out what's causing the problem.<br>We need to carry out a customer satisfaction survey. |
| chase someone up | to ask someone to do something that they promised to do but that have not yet done | If you don't hear from the builders this week, make sure you chase them up. |
| cross something off | to remove something from a list by drawing a line through it | Wendy can't go to the seminar after all so you can cross her name off. |
| cross something out | to draw a line through something you have written, usually because it is wrong | If you make a mistake on the form, just cross it out and write it again. |

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| cut something out | to stop eating, drinking or doing something, usually to improve your health | Her doctor advised her to cut out caffeine. |
| draw something up | to prepare something, usually official, in writing | I've drawn up a list of candidates that I'd like to interview. |
| drop someone or something off | to take someone or something to a particular place, usually by car, as you travel to a different place | I'll drop you off at the station on my way to work. |
| even something out | to become equal, or to make something equal | It's not fair that Carl has more clients than you, so let's give you two more and even things out a bit. |
| fill something in/out | to write the necessary information on an official document | We asked our customers to fill in a questionnaire so we could get some feedback. |
| follow something up | to find out more about something, or take more action connected with it | The idea sounded interesting so I decided to follow it up. |
| give something away | to tell people something secret, often without intending to | His retirement party was supposed to be a surprise, but Simon gave it away. |
| give something up | to stop doing or using something, often a habit | He gave up smoking on his doctor's advice. |
| hand something in/out | to give something to someone in a position of authority for their attention | We handed in the report before the deadline. |
| hand something over | to pass responsibility for something to someone | The founder handed the company over to his sons. |
| keep something down | to control the amount or number of something and prevent it from increasing | We need to work hard to keep our prices down.<br>I'm going to make a call, so can you keep the noise down, please? |
| keep something up | to make something continue at its present level and not allow it to fall | You're all doing a great job – keep it up! |
| kick something off | to start something | Let's kick the meeting off earlier today. |
| lay someone off | to stop employing someone, especially for reasons not connected to the worker's performance | The company reluctantly laid off 100 people when they had to move to smaller premises. |
| leave someone or something out | to not include something or someone; to omit | Leila feels that she's left out of all the major decision making.<br>You can leave last year's figures out of the report – they're not relevant. |
| let someone down | to disappoint someone, often because you have failed to do what you promised | He said he'd come with me, but he let me down at the last minute! |
| look over something | to quickly examine something | I asked Marie to look over these figures for me and see if there are any obvious mistakes. |
| look something up | to check a fact or get information about something from the appropriate place – a book or database etc. | If you're not sure what a word means, look it up in a dictionary. |

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| make something out | Manage with some difficulty to see or hear something clearly | My doctor's handwriting is terrible; I can't make out what he's written.<br>We were sitting at the back, so it was hard to make out what they were saying. |
| make something up | to invent something, such as an excuse or a story, sometimes in order to deceive | You don't have to tell the truth in a speaking exam – you can just make something up. |
| pass something on | to give something to someone, after someone else gave it to you, or tell someone something you have heard | Can you pass this report on to Amanda when you've read it, please? The senior managers told the team leaders but they didn't pass the news on to the workers. |
| pick someone or something up | to lift someone or something using your hands | I found a €20 note in the street and picked it up. |
| pick someone or something up | to collect, or to go and get, someone or something | I always pick the children up from school.<br>I need to pick up a parcel from the post office. |
| point something out | to give someone information, sometimes because you think they don't know or have forgotten it | He was planning a meeting for next week until I pointed out that half the team will be on holiday. |
| put something back | to change the time or date of an event so that it happens later than originally planned | We've put the trip back until June now because two people will be on holiday in May. |
| put something back | to make something happen later than it should happen | The fire put back the opening of the factory by several months. |
| put someone down | to make someone feel silly or not important by criticising them | I know that Terry made a mistake, but his boss shouldn't have put him down in front of his colleagues. |
| put something off | to delay an event or activity until a later time or date | Can we put our meeting off until next week? I'm really busy at the moment. |
| put something in | to submit something, to offer it for consideration, often a request | She put in an application to attend the seminar. |
| put something down | to record something in writing | Can you all put down your ideas and let me have a list for the next meeting? |
| put something on | to place an item of clothing, jewellery etc. on your body | She put on a scarf before she left because it was colder. |
| put something together | to prepare a piece of work by collecting ideas and suggestions and organising them | The management are putting together a plan to rescue the company. |
| see someone off | Go to their point of departure with someone who is leaving | I saw off our visitors at the station. |
| see someone out | to go with someone to the door when they're leaving | I'll see you out – it's not easy to find your way back to reception from here. |
| set something aside | to save something for a particular purpose | He sets aside some time every day to talk to the new recruits. |
| set something up | to establish a new company, organisation, system, etc. | She plans to set up her own business. |
| set something up | to arrange for an event or activity to happen | We need to set up a meeting to discuss the changes. |
| show someone or something off | to show something or someone you are proud of to other people, so that they will admire it or them | He invited us to dinner because he wanted to show off his new car! |

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| sort something out | to successfully deal with a problem or situation | There was a mix-up with the guest list but Molly sorted it out. |
| take someone on | to recruit someone | We've got too much work at the moment so we're taking on another assistant. |
| take something off | to remove an item of clothing or jewellery, etc. from your body | I took my coat off because it was really warm. |
| take something off | to remove something from something | I'm buying this as a gift so could you take off the price tag, please? |
| take something up | to take an interest in and start to do something [a sport or leisure activity] | I'm not very good at golf – I only took it up recently. |
| think something over | to consider an idea or plan carefully before making a decision | They offered him a job but he's going to think>/color> it <color blue>over before accepting. |
| throw something away | to get rid of something you don't want any more | We threw away the old chairs and bought new ones. |
| turn something down | to refuse an offer | He decided to turn the job down because there was too much travelling. |
| switch/turn something off | to stop something working by using by a tap, switch or button etc. | Don't forget to turn off the lights before you go. |
| switch/turn something on | to cause something to start working by using by a tap, switch or button etc. | Can you turn the radio on? I want to listen to the news. |
| try something out | to use something to discover if it works or if you like it | Don't forget to try out the audio-visual equipment before the presentation. |
| try something on | to put on a piece of clothing to see if it fits you or if you like it | I loved the dress when I saw it but I tried it on and it wasn't the right colour for me. |
| use something up | to finish a supply of something | I can't take any more days off – I've used up all my holiday for this year. |
| wake someone up | cause someone to become awake after sleeping | It's difficult to wake my son up for school on Mondays. |
| wrap something up | to complete or conclude something such as a discussion [informal] | It's getting late so let's wrap it up now and make a decision. |

**Group 2**

The object has to be placed BETWEEN the verb and particle.

- I backed my boss up because I think he's right.✔
- I backed up my boss because I think he's right.✖

Both nouns and pronouns can be used.

- I backed my boss up.✔
- I backed her up.✔

| Verb | Meaning | Examples |
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| back someone up | to support or help someone | I know you're nervous about telling the boss so I'll come with you and back you up. |
| back someone up | to say that someone is telling the truth | I know you don't believe me, but ask Claire – she'll back me up on this. |
| count someone in | to include someone in an activity or arrangement | If you're going out to lunch today, count me in. |
| draw someone into something / in | to make someone become involved in a conversation or situation, perhaps difficult or unpleasant [often passive] | They tried to draw me into their argument, but I refused.<br>I tried not to watch the film but I got drawn in! |
| get something across | to manage to make someone understand or believe something | It's important that we get this message across to all the staff. |
| show someone round/around | to lead someone through a place | After lunch, I'll show you round the factory, and the town too later if you have time. |

**Group 3**

The object has to be placed AFTER the verb and particle.

- I can count on Lucy to deal with the problem.✔
- I can count Lucy on to deal with the problem.✖

Both nouns and pronouns can be used.

- I can count on Lucy.✔
- I can count on her.✔

| Verb | Meaning | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| belong to someone or something | to be the property of someone or something | This pen belongs to Ben; he lent it to me.<br>My laptop actually belongs to the company, so I'll have to give it back when I leave. |
| belong to something | to be a member of something | Tony belongs to the local tennis club. |
| break into something | to begin being successful in a particular type of work, activity or area | We're hoping to break into the Asian market next year.<br>After a successful career as an actor, he broke into politics and became an MP. |
| come across something or someone | to find something or someone by chance | I was looking for my glasses when I came across some old photos. |
| come to something | to be a particular total when numbers or amounts are added together: | Altogether, the accommodation and food came to £600.<br>When we added up the number of guests, it came to over 200. |
| count on someone | to be confident that you can depend on someone | I can always count on my team mates in an emergency |
| deal with something | to take action in order to achieve something or to solve a problem | General enquiries are dealt with by our head office. |

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| deal with someone or something | to do business with a person or company | I prefer to deal with the same salesperson each time. |
| gain on someone or something | to get nearer to someone or something that is ahead in a pursuit or competitive situation | Our competitors are still selling more than us, but this month's figures show that we're starting to gain on them. |
| get at something | to suggest or express something in a way that is not direct or clear | You mean I shouldn't come tonight – is that what you're getting at? |
| get onto someone | to contact someone in order to ask them for help or to do something for you | Can you get onto the supplier? The delivery is two days late. |
| get onto something | to start talking about a subject | Let's get onto the next item on our agenda. How did we get onto cheese?! |
| get over something | to recover from an unusual or upsetting experience, or an illness | It took her a long time to get over the flu. |
| get through something | to use (all of a supply) of something | We're getting through a lot of coffee at the moment because we're working longer hours. |
| go after something | to try to get something | Are you planning to go after Paul's job when he leaves? |
| go over something | to examine or look at something in a careful or detailed way | I went over my report to check for spelling mistakes before I handed it in. |
| hang on something | to listen very carefully to someone's speech | She hung on every word of the presentation. |
| hang onto something | to keep something, often when you have to make an effort to do this | The President tried, but failed, to hang onto his reputation after the scandal. |
| look after someone or something | to take care of someone or something | We looked after their cat when they were on holiday. |
| look after something | to be in charge of something | John's going to look after the accounts while I'm away. |
| look for someone/something | to try to find something or someone | I'm looking for my keys – they're not where I usually keep them. |
| look into something | to investigate, or try to find out about something | I don't know why there was a delay, but I'm going to look into it. |
| look on/upon someone or something | to consider or think of someone or something in a certain way | Let's look on it as a challenge, rather than a problem! |
| look through something | to read something quickly, not every word, especially to find information you need | I looked through these files but I couldn't find the figures for January. |
| pop into somewhere | to visit there briefly, usually for a purpose | Can you pop into the post office on your way home and get some stamps? |
| rely on someone or something | to need a particular thing or the help and support of someone in order to continue, to work correctly, or to succeed | The success of this project relies on everyone making an effort.<br>I'm relying on the garage to fix the car by tomorrow. |

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| rely on someone or something | to trust someone or something or to expect him, her, or it to behave in a particular way | I can always rely on Jamie to cover for me when I'm on holiday – I never come back to any problems.<br>Don't rely on finding me here when you get back – I might have to go out. |
| run into someone | to meet someone you know]] when you are not expecting to | I ran into an old school friend the other day. |
| see to something | to do something that has to be done | The printer's not working; Jeremy's going to see to it later. |
| stand by someone | to support or remain loyal to someone, especially in a time of difficulty | We all stood by our team leader when he had family problems and had to take some time off. |
| stand by something | to show that you still believe or support something | We stand by our view that rates may need to rise to 5% next year. The Government failed to stand by its election promises. |
| stand for something | to represent something | FYI stands for 'for your information'. |
| stand for something | to support or represent certain principles or values | This presidential candidate stands for diversity and opportunities for everyone.<br>Our company stands for quality and affordability. |
| stick to something | to continue with a subject, activity, or plan without changing | He never sticks to the agenda at meetings – he always brings up new topics. |
| take after someone | to be similar to an older member of your family in appearance or character | He takes after his mum – they're both tall with brown hair. |
| turn over something | to make a certain amount of money during a stated period [a business] | We turned over £2m in our first year but there was very little profit because of the expenses. |

### Three-word phrasal verbs

| Verb | Meaning | Examples |
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| check up on someone | to make sure that someone is doing what they should be doing, or that everything is alright with them | I haven't heard from my son for a few weeks – I'm going to check up on him. |
| come down with something | to begin to suffer from an illness | I think I'm coming down with a cold. |
| come up with something | to suggest or think of an idea or plan | He came up with a great idea for a new marketing campaign. |
| get away with something | to escape blame or punishment when you do something wrong, or to avoid harm or criticism for something you did | She thought she could get away with cheating on her taxes |
| get back at someone | to punish someone because that person has done something wrong to you | I think he's trying to get back at her for what she said in the meeting. |

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| get back to someone | to communicate with someone again in order to give information, or because you were not able to speak to them before | I couldn’t answer her question so I’m going to look into it and get back to her later.<br>Sorry I can’t take your call; please leave a message and I’ll get back to you. |
| get down to something | to start to direct your efforts and attention towards something | I've got a lot of work to do, but I can't seem to get down to it. |
| get out of something | to avoid doing something that you do not want to do, or to escape responsibility for something | If I can get out of going to the meeting tonight, I will. |
| get up to something | to do something, often something that other people would disapprove of [informal] · | What did you get up to at the weekend?<br>I wonder what the children are getting up to in the garden – let’s go and see. |
| get round/around to something | to do something that you have intended to do for a long time | I still haven't got round to writing that report. |
| go along with something or someone | to support an idea, or to agree with someone's opinion | Katie's already agreed, but it's going to be hard to persuade Mike to go along with it. |
| grow out of something | to stop having an interest in something or stop doing it as you become older | My son said he wants to be an astronaut but I expect he’ll grow out of it. |
| grow out of something | to become too tall or too big to wear or use something | I give my children’s clothes to their younger cousins when they grow out of them. |
| look back on something | to think about past events | We can look back on our past mistakes and learn something from them. |
| look down on someone | to think that you are better than someone | His colleagues look down on him because he didn’t go to one of the top schools. |
| look out for someone or something | to look carefully around you in order to try to find a specific person or thing | Take the second turning on the left and look out for a big red building on the right; my office is opposite that. |
| look out for someone | to take care of someone and make sure that they are treated well | My friend’s son is starting at my company next week. It’s his first job and she's asked me to look out for him. |
| look up to someone | to admire and respect someone, usually someone older | My children look up to their grandfather because he’s had such an interesting and productive life. |
| look forward to something | to feel pleasure because an event or activity is going to happen | We’re all looking forward to our holiday. |
| make up for something | to compensate for something missing, lost, or lacking | I’ve been working late most evenings but I’m taking two days off next week to make up for it. |
| put something down to something | to think that a problem or situation is caused by a particular thing | I put the failure of the project down to bad management. |
| put in for something | to make an official request to have or do something | I'm putting in for a job at the hospital.<br>Richard's finally put in for his driving test. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| put up with someone or something | to accept or tolerate an unpleasant situation or person · | I don’t know how you put up with your boss – he’s so rude! |



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