

Idiomatic expressions with prepositions

Verbs often combine with prepositions. These combinations are called phrasal verbs. There are numerous phrasal verbs in English and they cause a great deal of difficulty for ESL students. It is nearly impossible for a non-native speaker to learn all of these idiomatic expressions. Still, you must be familiar with the most important ones.

Interestingly, sometimes the same verb takes different prepositions with different objects. The meanings of all of these expressions are usually the same.

Examples are given below.

Agree on / agree about / agree with

Agree with a person, policy or opinion

I entirely agree with your opinion.

I don't agree with you.

Agree about a subject of discussion

We never agree about anything.

Agree on a price, a matter of discussion etc.

We couldn't agree on a price.

Agree to a suggestion or proposal.

She didn't agree to my proposal.

Angry about / angry with

We are angry with people and angry about things. The preposition at is sometimes used with both people and things.

She was angry with me for reading her letters.

Idiomatic expressions with prepositions

OR She was angry at me for reading her letters.

My parents were angry about my dismal performance. OR My parents were angry at my dismal performance.

Argue about / argue with

We argue about a matter.

After his death, his children argued about his property.

They argued about his affair. (NOT They argued with his affair.)

We can argue with a person.

I don't want to argue with you.

He argued with his wife. (NOT He argued about his wife.)

We can also argue for or against a preposition.

They argued against increasing the legal drinking age.