

Separable phrasal verbs

Many English verbs can be followed by prepositions or adverb particles. Some verbs and prepositions / particles are regularly used together. These combinations are often called phrasal verbs. Examples are: take off, put off and set off, pay back, give back, bail out, ran up, put up, bring up, clean up etc.

There are two kinds of phrasal verbs: separable and inseparable

Separable phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs made with adverb particles are usually separable. As the name itself indicates the two parts of a separable phrasal verb are separable. The particle in a separable phrasal verb can go before or after noun objects.

She switched off the light. OR She switched the light off.

He paid back the debt. OR He paid the debt back.

Tea companies have put up the prices. OR Tea companies have put the prices up.

I have to clean up this mess. OR I have to clean this mess up.

Note that if the object is a pronoun, the particle goes after it.

Please switch it off. (NOT Please switch off it.) Here the object 'it' is a pronoun. Therefore the particle goes after it.

Give me my money back. OR Give me back my money. (NOT Give back me my money.)

Here the object is a pronoun. Therefore the particle goes after the object.

When the object is a noun or a noun phrase, the two parts of a separable phrasal verb usually remain together.