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IDIOMS FOR IELTS & TOEFL

A COMPLETE RANGE OF IDIOMS

These are the IDIOMS of high-value in IELTS & TOEFL.
If you know how to use these IDIOMS, you'll
definitely score best in IELTS & TOEFL.

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You will find that by learning these idioms in English will help you raise your TOEFL and IELTS scores specially helping you in the speaking and listening sections. Further, you will enjoy the language more as well as feeling you can converse as a native with natives. As you will see from the above list of idioms, they give a more vivid meaning to a set of words. Many native English speakers in fact do not realize they use idioms so often as they do during their daily lives. Make a note of these idiom in English and learn their meanings. Then enjoy using them and using them in conversations with others.

Common Idioms List



Set 1

Common Idioms	Definitions
<i>It cost me an arm and a leg</i> to take my trip to Australia.	Very expensive
<i>I was over the moon</i> when he asked me to marry him.	Extremely pleased or happy
You are taking your IELTS test next week?? Aren't you jumping the gun . You've only just started studying.	Doing or starting something too early
He comes round to see me once in a blue moon .	Happening very rarely
He's got a chip on his shoulder .	Feeling inferior or having a grievance about something
<i>I reckon getting a band 7 in IELTS will be a piece of cake!</i> I'm very good at English.	Very easy
The money sent by comic relief to help poverty in Africa is just a drop in the ocean . They need far more than this.	A very small part of something much bigger
Getting a low score the first time I took IELTS was a blessing in disguise . It forced me to study extremely hard so I got a much better score the next time.	Something positive that isn't recognized until later
We have to actually do something about global warming. Actions speak louder than words .	It's better to actually do something rather than just talking about it
<i>I bumped into Jenny</i> in town the other day. It's a small world.	Meeting someone you would not have expected to

Set 2

Common Idioms	Definitions
<i>Oh well, I got 5.5 in IELTS again. Back to the drawing board!</i>	When an attempt to do something fails and it's time to start all over again using different methods
<i>I hate my job so much I can't bare going to work, but if I quit I don't think I can get another job. I'm really stuck / caught between a rock and a hard place.</i>	Having two very bad choices. (note: stuck/caught can be omitted)
<i>I have to bite my tongue so I don't say what I really think of him!</i>	Wanting to say something but stopping yourself.



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Come on, cut to the chase . We haven't got all day!	Leave out all the unnecessary details and just get to the point
Are you putting all of your savings into that company? Don't put all your eggs in one basket.	Putting all of ones resources into one possibility
Try not to worry about it. Every cloud has a silver lining.	Believing that every bad situation has a positive side / eventually leads to something good
It was difficult when I moved to another country but I eventually found my feet .	To become comfortable in what you are doing
My parents are very fixed in their ways . They won't start using the internet.	Not wanting to change from the normal ways of doing things
I think he got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning . He is in a terrible mood.	To refer to someone who is having a bad day
My mother will always go the extra mile to help people.	Doing much more than is required when doing something

Go to the Idiom practice exercise for these 10 words

Set 3

Common Idioms	Definitions
I think you've hit the nail on the head . That's the reason he didn't get the job.	Say exactly the right thing
Today's going so badly. If it's not one thing, it's the other .	When everything seems to be going wrong
I just said it in the heat of the moment . I was angry. I know I shouldn't have.	Saying or doing something suddenly without thinking about it
Keep an eye on him . I think he may cheat in the exam.	Watch someone or something carefully
Have you heard? John down the road has kicked the bucket .	Died
I don't want to argue with him again. It's better to let sleeping dogs lie .	Avoid a conflict
I told him what gift you have bought him for his birthday. Sorry, I didn't mean to let the cat out of the bag .	Tell someone something that you were not supposed to
Don't tell her what you really think of her if she's helping you with your English! Don't bite the hand that feeds you .	Hurt or upset someone who is helping you
I'm not sure which party he is going to vote for. He's sitting on the fence .	Not making a firm decision between different choices



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Everything she does is **very over the top**. She can't just have a few drinks – she has to get really drunk.

Excessive

View these 10 idioms in use and practice them

Set 4



Common Idioms	Definitions
Let's keep studying for IELTS. Practice makes perfect .	Continuously doing something to improve
Don't get upset about what he said. He's just pulling your leg .	Joking around
Sorry but I think I'll take a rain check on that.	To decline an offer that you will take up later
As a rule of thumb , I don't study at weekends. I spend the time with my family.	Principal that is strictly adhered / kept to
I can smell a rat . He said he has a PhD but he can't even remember which university he studied at.	To sense that something is not right
She's the spitting image of her mother.	To look exactly like someone else
The ball's in your court now. What are you going to do?	Telling someone it's now their turn to make a decision
Unfortunately I think he'll be studying for IELTS until the cows come home . His English is very poor.	For a very long time
It was all tongue-in-cheek . He didn't really mean what he said.	Something said in humour rather than seriously
She's feeling under the weather today so she won't be going to work.	Unwell

Go to idioms exercises for Set 4 words



Set 5

Common Idioms	Definitions
We've had some big disagreements over the years, but it's all water under the bridge now. We get on fine.	Things from the past that are not important anymore
You are what you eat so it's better to have a healthy diet.	If you eat bad food, you'll be unhealthy, if you eat good food, you'll be healthy
You can't judge a book by its cover . I need to get to know him before I decide what he is like.	The belief that outside appearances do not reveal what someone or something is really like
We're really working against the clock now. We must hurry.	Not having enough time to do something
Why are we bothering? We're flogging a dead horse . Our online business is making no money, so we should move on and do something else.	Attempting to continue with something that is finished / over



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<i>I bent over backwards to help him. I hope he appreciates it.</i>	<i>Doing all you can to help someone</i>
<i>So you have the IELTS test today?? Break a leg.</i>	<i>Good luck</i>
<i>Ok, I'm playing devil's advocate here, but if marijuana is legalized, isn't it more likely young people will smoke it?</i>	<i>To put forward a side in an argument that may not be your own in order to show the counter-argument / ensure all sides are discussed</i>
<i>Hold your horses! We haven't won anything yet.</i>	<i>Telling someone who is getting ahead of themselves to wait / be patient</i>
<i>She is driving me up the wall. She won't stop talking.</i>	<i>Annoying or irritating somebody</i>



PART 2

Every cloud has a silver lining

Meaning: Try and be as optimistic as you can be, however difficult you are finding the situation at the moment, better times will come in the future.

Example: Every cloud has a silver lining, you will find a new job very soon.

A hot potato

Meaning: People talking about a current topic which cannot be agreed upon.

Example: The subject of Brexit is a hot potato.

Give someone the benefit of the doubt

Meaning: Believe what the person is or has said, until there is proof.

Example: Give him the benefit of the doubt, he may not have been there.

Let sleeping dogs lie

Meaning: Leave the situation as it is, do not get involved.

Example: Let sleeping dogs lie, you were not there so you cannot comment.

Once in a blue moon

Meaning: Something happens extremely rarely.

Example: Once in a blue moon there will be an eclipse of the sun by the moon.

Steal someone's thunder

Meaning: Take the credit for a situation that someone else deserves

Example: He stole his colleague's thunder about doing an excellent job.

Best of both worlds

Meaning: A person has all the advantages of a given situation.

Example: They have the best of both worlds as they spend half the year in England. And the rest of the year in Switzerland.



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Don't count your chickens before the eggs have hatched

Meaning: Do not plan something as the event may not occur.

Example: Don't count your chickens before the eggs have hatched as the deal may not happen.



It takes two to tango

Meaning: Two or more people could be involved in a situation.

Example: It takes two to tango, so there are more people involved in the problem in the firm than you think.

Your guess is as good as mine

Meaning: A person does not know the answer

Example: Your guess is as good as mine as to where they both went last night.

See eye to eye

Meaning: To agree with someone else on a subject.

Example: We see eye to eye on how to progress the matter further.



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A picture paints a thousand words

Meaning: To make a presentation to visually show what you want to do or achieve.

Example: The picture painted a thousand words of how he thought the firm should develop.

Catch someone off guard

Meaning: To catch someone by surprise

Example: He was caught off guard when they asked him to be the new chairman.

Hear it on the grapevine

Meaning: To hear rumours about a person or an event which may or may not have happened.

Example: She heard it on the grapevine that he had been promoted.

Get down to business

Meaning: To get the meeting started properly

Example: As every member of the team is now here, we can get down to business and start the meeting.

Back to square one

Meaning: To go back to the beginning and start again.

Example: The project was not good enough. We need to go back to square one and start again.



Fifty fifty

Meaning: To divide something equally ie to divide in half

Example: Divide the cakes fifty fifty

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Go the extra mile

Meaning: To do more than is expected of you

Example: He went the extra mile to ensure everything was finished on time.



On the same page

Meaning: Two people are in agreement about a situation.

Example: We are on the same page as to how to take the situation forward now.

Don't rock the boat

Meaning: Do not cause a problem or make an issue

Example: Don't rock the boat about the costs of the project.



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Don't upset the apple cart

Meaning: Rather like don't rock the boat, do not make a fuss.

Example: Don't upset the apple card by making a scene.

The sky's the limit

Meaning: A person can achieve anything they want.

Example: The sky's the limit, work hard and you will progress to the top of the firm.

The elephant in the room

Meaning: This relates to an obvious issue that is not being talked about

Example: Talk about the elephant in the room and deal with the major issue that needs to be discussed now.

Take the bull by the horns

Meaning: Similar to the elephant in the room. Deal with the problem.

Example: Take the bull by the horns, you must sort out the major problems.

In the black

Meaning: The business is earning money and making a profit.

Example: Finally, the business is in the black as we have had a good year and made more profits than we thought we would make.



In the red

Meaning: The business is not making any profit and so is losing money.

Example: The business is in the red as they expanded too quickly and their overheads are too high.

Read between the lines

Meaning: To understand something that may not be entirely clear

Example: Read between the lines, work out what is not being said at the meeting and sort out the problem.

Uphill battle

Meaning: There are many obstacles to sort out before we achieve what we want.



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Example: There is an uphill battle to win the contract.

No time to lose

Meaning: Something must be finished very soon

Example: He has no time to lose as his project is due in first thing tomorrow morning.

Word and mouth:

Meaning: News which spreads very fast as people tell other people the same news.

Example: The news spread by word and mouth that the new hotel was very successful.

Throw in the towel

Meaning: To give up, leave or quit

Example: He threw in the towel and left his job as he was unhappy.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder

Meaning: Being away for a while from someone or something makes you miss/appreciate that person or situation.

Example: Absence made his heart grow fonder and he realised he missed her terribly.

A watch pot never boils

Meaning: A situation or event can take far longer than expected. Don't keep watching for developments.

Example: A watch pot never boils when you are waiting for something to cook more quickly.

Better late than never

Meaning: It is better to finish something no matter how long it takes to do.

Example: He finally finished the paper. Better late than never as it was due last month.

Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

Meaning: Finish what needs to be finished today rather than tomorrow.

Example: Don't put off until tomorrow – finish the project today.

Good things come to those who wait

Meaning: Be patient. Good will come out of the situation.

Example: Good things come to those who wait. Your promotion will come soon.

Birds of a feather

Meaning: People who are like minded often spend more time together.

Example: Those two are birds of a feather. No wonder they meet so often.

There is no time like the present

Meaning: Do what you want to do now. Do not put off until tomorrow.

Example: There is no time like the present. You need to finish your project and you have the time to finish it now.



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If it ain't broke don't fix it

Meaning: If something is already or still working, leave it as it is as it is still working.

Example: If it ain't broke don't fix it, the car still works so do not buy a new one.

There is no such thing as a free lunch

Meaning: Everything has a hidden cost.

Example: There is no such thing as a free lunch. He wants you to invest in his company

Practice makes perfect

Meaning: Keep practising and you will become better at it.

Example: You will become a great tennis player. Practice makes perfect.

When in Rome, do as the Romans do

Meaning: When you are doing something new, act like others do in that situation.

Example: Try eating English food when in England. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Laughter is the spice of life, laugh on (also known as laughter is the best medicine)

Meaning: Laughing can help us get through a difficult time in our lives.

Example: Laughter is the spice of life, laugh on and we will help cheer you up.

Don't judge a book by its cover

Meaning: Do not be quick to judge a person or a book – you might like the person more than you think you will/you may enjoy the book more than you expected.

Example: Don't judge a book by its cover. The book is excellent and I recommend that you try reading it again.

Honesty is the best policy

Meaning: Telling the truth is always the better option.

Example: Honesty is the best policy. Tell your manager you made a mistake.



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Why is using phrasal verbs so important?

Using phrasal verbs in your speaking makes you more fluent English speaker and makes the language sound more natural. Learning to use them properly can be a difficult challenge, though, but once you master the skill, your English will become more fluent and rich.

In the IELTS test, using phrasal verbs in your speaking section of the test especially will show your examiner that your speaking skills are natural. It is very important, though, to use them correctly, so you should study them beforehand.

Don't use them, if you're uncertain, since using them incorrectly will sound messy and confusing to the ears of a native English speaker.

In the best case, learning a bunch of new phrasal verbs can double or even triple your vocabulary. Why? Because you will learn two or more individual words and their meanings, and on top of that you can add a whole new phrase to your vocabulary with a whole new different meaning.



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1. Cheer up

Cheer up means become happier. As an example: *She **cheered up** when she saw a puppy.*

Cheer somebody up means making somebody happier.

As an example: *I brought you this cake to **cheer you up**.*



2. Eat out

Eat out means going to a restaurant to eat. As an example: *We are going to **eat out** tonight.*

3. Find out

Find out means discovering an information. As an example: *How did you **find out** where I live?*

4. Get up

Get up means getting out of bed. As an example: *I must **get up** early tomorrow to go to work.*

It can also mean standing up. As an example: *He **got up** from the couch after hearing the doorbell.*

5. Give up

Give up means to stop trying. As an example: *Fixing my computer was too hard so I **gave up**.*

Give something up means quitting a habit. As an example: *I think I should **give up** smoking.*

6. Grow up

Grow up means becoming an adult.

As an example: *When he **grows up** he wants to become a policeman.*

7. Hang out

Hang out means spending time with someone, usually doing something relaxing.

As an example: *Do you want to **hang out** and go to the movies tomorrow?*

8. Hang up

Hang up means ending a phone call.

As an example: *My mom told me to call her back before she **hung up**.*

9. Hold on

Hold on means waiting a short amount of time.

As an example: *Could you **hold on** a minute? I have to use the bathroom.*

10. Look forward to

Look forward to something means being excited for the future.

As an example: *I'm really **looking forward to** the concert next week.*

11. Look out

Look out means being careful or alert. As an example: *Look out! That bike is coming really fast.*

12. Put on

Put something on means putting clothes or accessories on.

As an example: *For the wedding this summer, I would like to put on my blue dress.*



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13. Take out

Take something out means removing something from a place.

As an example: *My brother promised to **take** the trash **out**.*

Take somebody out means paying for taking somebody to go somewhere with you.

As an example: *My boyfriend **took** me **out** for dinner last night.*



14. Turn on/off

Turn something on means switching something on.

As an example: *Can you **turn on** the TV, please?*

Turn something off means switching something off. As an example: *I asked him to **turn off** the lights from the kitchen.*



15. Wake up

Wake up means to stop sleeping. As an example: *Every morning I must **wake up** at eight.*

16. Work out

Work out means exercising. As an example: *She **works out** at the gym every week.*

It can also mean being successful at something. As an example: *The plan **worked out** fine in the end.*

Part 2

phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
ask somebody out	invite on a date	Brian asked Judy out to dinner and a movie.
ask around	ask many people the same question	I asked around but nobody has seen my wallet.
add up to something	equal	Your purchases add up to \$205.32.
back something up	reverse	You'll have to back up your car so that I can get out.
back somebody up	support	My wife backed me up over my decision to quit my job.
blow up	explode	The racing car blew up after it crashed into the fence.
blow something up	add air	We have to blow 50 balloons up for the party.
break down	stop functioning (vehicle, machine)	Our car broke down at the side of the highway in the snowstorm.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
break down	get upset	The woman broke down when the police told her that her son had died.
 break <i>something</i> down	divide into smaller parts	Our teacher broke the final project down into three separate parts.
break in	force entry to a building	Somebody broke in last night and stole our stereo.
break into <i>something</i>	enter forcibly	The firemen had to break into the room to rescue the children.
break <i>something</i> in	wear something a few times so that it doesn't look/feel new	I need to break these shoes in before we run next week.
break in	interrupt	The TV station broke in to report the news of the president's death.
break up	end a relationship	My boyfriend and I broke up before I moved to America.
break up	start laughing (informal)	The kids just broke up as soon as the clown started talking.
 break out	escape	The prisoners broke out of jail when the guards weren't looking.
break out in <i>something</i>	develop a skin condition	I broke out in a rash after our camping trip.
bring <i>somebody</i> down	make unhappy	This sad music is bringing me down .
bring <i>somebody</i> up	raise a child	My grandparents brought me up after my parents died.
bring <i>something</i> up	start talking about a subject	My mother walks out of the room when my father brings up sports.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
bring <i>something</i> up	vomit	He drank so much that he brought his dinner up in the toilet.
call around	phone many different places/people	We called around but we weren't able to find the car part we needed.
call <i>somebody</i> back	return a phone call	I called the company back but the offices were closed for the weekend.
call <i>something</i> off	cancel	Jason called the wedding off because he wasn't in love with his fiancé.
call <i>on</i> <i>somebody</i>	ask for an answer or opinion	The professor called on me for question 1.
call <i>on</i> <i>somebody</i>	visit somebody	We called on you last night but you weren't home.
call <i>somebody</i> up	phone	Give me your phone number and I will call you up when we are in town.
calm down	relax after being angry	You are still mad. You need to calm down before you drive the car.
not care for <i>somebody/ something</i>	not like (formal)	I don't care for his behaviour.
catch up	get to the same point as somebody else	You'll have to run faster than that if you want to catch up with Marty.
check in	arrive and register at a hotel or airport	We will get the hotel keys when we check in .
check out	leave a hotel	You have to check out of the hotel before 11:00 AM.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
check somebody/ something out	look at carefully, investigate	The company checks out all new employees.
check out somebody/ something	look at (informal)	Check out the crazy hair on that guy!
cheer up	become happier	She cheered up when she heard the good news.
cheer somebody up	make happier	I brought you some flowers to cheer you up .
chip in	help	If everyone chips in we can get the kitchen painted by noon.
clean something up	tidy, clean	Please clean up your bedroom before you go outside.
come across something	find unexpectedly	I came across these old photos when I was tidying the closet.
come apart	separate	The top and bottom come apart if you pull hard enough.
come down with something	become sick	My nephew came down with chicken pox this weekend.
come forward	volunteer for a task or to give evidence	The woman came forward with her husband's finger prints.
come from some place	originate in	The art of origami comes from Asia.
count on somebody/ something	rely on	I am counting on you to make dinner while I am out.
cross something out	draw a line through	Please cross out your old address and write your new one.
cut back on something	consume less	My doctor wants me to cut back on sweets and fatty foods.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
cut something down	make something fall to the ground	We had to cut the old tree in our yard down after the storm.
cut in	 interrupt	Your father cut in while I was dancing with your uncle.
cut in	pull in too closely in front of another vehicle	The bus driver got angry when that car cut in .
cut in	start operating (of an engine or electrical device)	The air conditioner cuts in when the temperature gets to 22°C.
cut something off	remove with something sharp	The doctors cut off his leg because it was severely injured.
cut something off	stop providing	The phone company cut off our phone because we didn't pay the bill.
cut somebody off	take out of a will	My grandparents cut my father off when he remarried.
cut something out	remove part of something (usually with scissors and paper)	I cut this ad out of the newspaper.
do somebody/ something over	beat up, ransack (BrE, informal)	He's lucky to be alive. His shop was done over by a street gang.
do something over	 do again (AmE)	My teacher wants me to do my essay over because she doesn't like my topic.
do away with something	discard	It's time to do away with all of these old tax records.
do something up	fasten, close	Do your coat up before you go outside. It's snowing!



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phrasal verb		meaning	example sentence
dress up		wear nice clothing	It's a fancy restaurant so we have to dress up .
drop back		move back in a position/group	Andrea dropped back to third place when she fell off her bike.
drop in/ by/ over		come without an appointment	I might drop in/by/over for tea sometime this week.
drop somebody/ something off		take somebody/ something somewhere and leave them/it there	I have to drop my sister off at work before I come over.
drop out		quit a class, school etc	I dropped out of Science because it was too difficult.
eat out		eat at a restaurant	I don't feel like cooking tonight. Let's eat out .
end up		eventually reach/do/decide	We ended up renting a movie instead of going to the theatre.
fall apart		break into pieces	My new dress fell apart in the washing machine.
fall down		fall to the ground	The picture that you hung up last night fell down this morning.
fall out		separate from an interior	The money must have fallen out of my pocket.
fall out		(of hair, teeth) become loose and unattached	His hair started to fall out when he was only 35.
figure something out		understand, find the answer	I need to figure out how to fit the piano and the bookshelf in this room.
fill something in		to write information in	Please fill in the form with your name, address, and phone number.



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phrasal verb		meaning	example sentence
		blanks, as on a form (BrE)	
fill something out		to write information in blanks, as on a form (AmE)	The form must be filled out in capital letters.
fill something up		fill to the top	I always fill the water jug up when it is empty.
find out		discover	We don't know where he lives. How can we find out ?
find something out		discover	We tried to keep the time of the party a secret, but Samantha found it out .
get something across/ over		communicate, make understandable	I tried to get my point across/over to the judge but she wouldn't listen.
get along/on		like each other	I was surprised how well my new girlfriend and my sister got along/on .
get around		have mobility	My grandfather can get around fine in his new wheelchair.
get away		go on a vacation	We worked so hard this year that we had to get away for a week.
get away with something		do without being noticed or punished	Jason always gets away with cheating in his maths tests.
get back		return	We got back from our vacation last week.
get something back		receive something you had before	Liz finally got her Science notes back from my room-mate.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
get back at <i>somebody</i>	retaliate, take revenge	My sister got back at me for stealing her shoes. She stole my favourite hat.
get back into <i>something</i>	become interested in something again	I finally got back into my novel and finished it.
get on <i>something</i>	step onto a vehicle	We're going to freeze out here if you don't let us get on the bus.
get over <i>something</i>	recover from an illness, loss, difficulty	I just got over the flu and now my sister has it.
get over <i>something</i>	overcome a problem	The company will have to close if it can't get over the new regulations.
get round to <i>something</i>	finally find time to do (AmE: get around to something)	I don't know when I am going to get round to writing the thank you cards.
get together	meet (usually for social reasons)	Let's get together for a BBQ this weekend.
get up	get out of bed	I got up early today to study for my exam.
get up	stand	You should get up and give the elderly man your seat.
give <i>somebody away</i>	reveal hidden information about somebody	His wife gave him away to the police.
give <i>somebody away</i>	take the bride to the altar	My father gave me away at my wedding.
give <i>something away</i>	ruin a secret	My little sister gave the surprise party away by accident.
give <i>something away</i>	give something to somebody for free	The library was giving away old books on Friday.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
give something back	return a borrowed item	I have to give these skates back to Franz before his hockey game.
give in	reluctantly stop fighting or arguing	My boyfriend didn't want to go to the ballet, but he finally gave in .
give something out	give to many people (usually at no cost)	They were giving out free perfume samples at the department store.
give something up	quit a habit	I am giving up smoking as of January 1st.
give up	stop trying	My maths homework was too difficult so I gave up .
go after somebody	follow somebody	My brother tried to go after the thief in his car.
go after something	try to achieve something	I went after my dream and now I am a published writer.
go against somebody	compete, oppose	We are going against the best soccer team in the city tonight.
go ahead	start, proceed	Please go ahead and eat before the food gets cold.
go back	return to a place	I have to go back home and get my lunch.
go out	leave home to go on a social event	We're going out for dinner tonight.
go out with somebody	date	Jesse has been going out with Luke since they met last winter.
go over something	review	Please go over your answers before you submit your test.
go over	visit somebody nearby	I haven't seen Tina for a long time. I think I'll go over for an hour or two.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
go without <i>something</i>	suffer lack or deprivation	When I was young, we went without winter boots.
grow apart	stop being friends over time	My best friend and I grew apart after she changed schools.
grow back	regrow	My roses grew back this summer.
grow into <i>something</i>	grow big enough to fit	This bike is too big for him now, but he should grow into it by next year.
grow out of <i>something</i>	get too big for	Elizabeth needs a new pair of shoes because she has grown out of her old ones.
grow up	become an adult	When Jack grows up he wants to be a fireman.
hand <i>something</i> down	give something used to somebody else	I handed my old comic books down to my little cousin.
hand <i>something</i> in	submit	I have to hand in my essay by Friday.
hand <i>something</i> out	to distribute to a group of people	We will hand out the invitations at the door.
hand <i>something</i> over	give (usually unwillingly)	The police asked the man to hand over his wallet and his weapons.
hang in	stay positive (informal)	Hang in there. I'm sure you'll find a job very soon.
hang on	wait a short time (informal)	Hang on while I grab my coat and shoes!
hang out	spend time relaxing (informal)	Instead of going to the party we are just going to hang out at my place.
hang up	end a phone call	He didn't say goodbye before he hung up .



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
hold somebody/ something back	prevent from doing/going	I had to hold my dog back because there was a cat in the park.
hold something back	hide an emotion	Jamie held back his tears at his grandfather's funeral.
hold on	wait a short time	Please hold on while I transfer you to the Sales Department.
hold onto somebody/ something	hold firmly using your hands or arms	Hold onto your hat because it's very windy outside.
hold somebody/ something up	rob	A man in a black mask held the bank up this morning.
keep on doing something	continue doing	Keep on stirring until the liquid comes to a boil.
keep something from somebody	not tell	We kept our relationship from our parents for two years.
keep somebody/ something out	stop from entering	Try to keep the wet dog out of the living room.
keep something up	continue at the same rate	If you keep those results up you will get into a great college.
let somebody down	fail to support or help, disappoint	I need you to be on time. Don't let me down this time.
let somebody in	allow to enter	Can you let the cat in before you go to school?
log in (or on)	sign in (to a website, database etc)	I can't log in to Facebook because I've forgotten my password.
log out (or off)	sign out (of a website, database etc)	If you don't log off somebody could get into your account.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
look after <i>somebody/ something</i>	take care of	I have to look after my sick grandmother.
look down on <i>somebody</i> 	think less of, consider inferior	Ever since we stole that chocolate bar your dad has looked down on me.
look for <i>somebody/ something</i>	try to find	I'm looking for a red dress for the wedding.
look forward to <i>something</i>	be excited about the future	I'm looking forward to the Christmas break.
look into <i>something</i>	investigate	We are going to look into the price of snowboards today.
look out	be careful, vigilant, and take notice	Look out! That car's going to hit you!
look out for <i>somebody/ something</i>	be especially vigilant for	Don't forget to look out for snakes on the hiking trail.
look something over	check, examine	Can you look over my essay for spelling mistakes?
look something up 	search and find information in a reference book or database	We can look her phone number up on the Internet.
look up to <i>somebody</i>	have a lot of respect for	My little sister has always looked up to me.
make something up	invent, lie about something	Josie made up a story about why we were late.
make up	forgive each other	We were angry last night, but we made up at breakfast.
make somebody up	apply cosmetics to	My sisters made me up for my graduation party.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
mix something up	confuse two or more things	I mixed up the twins' names again!
pass away	 die	His uncle passed away last night after a long illness.
pass out	faint	It was so hot in the church that an elderly lady passed out .
pass something out	give the same thing to many people	The professor passed the textbooks out before class.
pass something up	decline (usually something good)	I passed up the job because I am afraid of change.
pay somebody back	return owed money	Thanks for buying my ticket. I'll pay you back on Friday.
pay for something	be punished for doing something bad	That bully will pay for being mean to my little brother.
pick something out	choose	I picked out three sweaters for you to try on.
point somebody/ something out	indicate with your finger	I'll point my boyfriend out when he runs by.
put something down	put what you are holding on a surface or floor	You can put the groceries down on the kitchen counter.
put somebody down	 insult, make somebody feel stupid	The students put the substitute teacher down because his pants were too short.
put something off	postpone	We are putting off our trip until January because of the hurricane.
put something out	extinguish	The neighbours put the fire out before the firemen arrived.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
put something together 	assemble	I have to put the crib together before the baby arrives.
put up with somebody/ something	tolerate	I don't think I can put up with three small children in the car.
put something on	put clothing/ accessories on your body	Don't forget to put on your new earrings for the party.
run into somebody/ something	meet unexpectedly	I ran into an old school-friend at the mall.
run over somebody/ something	drive a vehicle over a person or thing	I accidentally ran over your bicycle in the driveway.
run over/ through something	rehearse, review	Let's run over/through these lines one more time before the show.
run away 	leave unexpectedly, escape	The child ran away from home and has been missing for three days.
run out	have none left	We ran out of shampoo so I had to wash my hair with soap.
send something back	return (usually by mail)	My letter got sent back to me because I used the wrong stamp.
set something up 	arrange, organize	Our boss set a meeting up with the president of the company.
set somebody up	trick, trap	The police set up the car thief by using a hidden camera.
shop around	compare prices	I want to shop around a little before I decide on these boots.
show off	act extra special for people	He always shows off on his skateboard



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
 sleep over	watching (usually boastfully)	 You should sleep over tonight if the weather is too bad to drive home.
sort something out	organize, resolve a problem	We need to sort the bills out before the first of the month.
stick to something	continue doing something, limit yourself to one particular thing	You will lose weight if you stick to the diet.
switch something off	stop the energy flow, turn off	The light's too bright. Could you switch it off .
switch something on	start the energy flow, turn on	We heard the news as soon as we switched on the car radio.
take after somebody	resemble a family member	I take after my mother. We are both impatient.
take something apart	purposely break into pieces	He took the car brakes apart and found the problem.
take something back	return an item	I have to take our new TV back because it doesn't work.
 take off	start to fly	My plane takes off in five minutes.
take something off	remove something (usually clothing)	Take off your socks and shoes and come in the lake!
take something out	remove from a place or thing	Can you take the garbage out to the street for me?
take somebody out	pay for somebody to go somewhere with you	My grandparents took us out for dinner and a movie.



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
tear <i>something</i> up	rip into pieces	I tore up my ex-boyfriend's letters and gave them back to him.
think back	remember (often + to, sometimes + on)	When I think back on my youth, I wish I had studied harder.
think <i>something</i> over	consider	I'll have to think this job offer over before I make my final decision.
throw <i>something</i> away	dispose of	We threw our old furniture away when we won the lottery.
turn <i>something</i> down	decrease the volume or strength (heat, light etc)	Please turn the TV down while the guests are here.
turn <i>something</i> down	refuse	I turned the job down because I don't want to move.
turn <i>something</i> off	stop the energy flow, switch off	Your mother wants you to turn the TV off and come for dinner.
turn <i>something</i> on	start the energy, switch on	It's too dark in here. Let's turn some lights on .
turn <i>something</i> up	increase the volume or strength (heat, light etc)	Can you turn the music up ? This is my favourite song.
turn up	appear suddenly	Our cat turned up after we put posters up all over the neighbourhood.
try <i>something</i> on	sample clothing	I'm going to try these jeans on , but I don't think they will fit.
try <i>something</i> out	test	I am going to try this new brand of detergent out .



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phrasal verb	meaning	example sentence
use <i>something</i> up	finish the supply	The kids used all of the toothpaste up so we need to buy some more.
wake up	stop sleeping	We have to wake up early for work on Monday.
warm <i>somebody/ something</i> up	increase the temperature	You can warm your feet up in front of the fireplace.
warm up	prepare body for exercise	I always warm up by doing sit-ups before I go for a run.
wear off	fade away	Most of my make-up wore off before I got to the party.
work out	exercise	I work out at the gym three times a week.
work out	be successful	Our plan worked out fine.
work <i>something</i> out	make a calculation	We have to work out the total cost before we buy the house.



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