

PHRASAL VERB BASICS

1. DEFINITION: PHRASAL VERB versus VERB WITH A PREPOSITION

A true phrasal verb is an **IDIOMATIC VERB** combined with a **PARTICLE** (which is either a preposition or an adverb) to create an extended or new meaning. Textbooks and dictionaries often lump verbs that are commonly followed by a preposition into this category, but there is a difference, even if it is subtle.

Consider the following: **The box blew up the hill.**

Did the hill explode because the box was a bomb? Or Did the wind blow the box up the hill?

A preposition showing the direction of the action is not considered a Phrasal Verb, but they are often included among phrasal verb lists if they are high frequency.

I drove (*by-towards-into*) my friend's house.

I drove (*back to / away from / over to*) my friend's house.

2. SEPARABILITY

With **separable** phrasal verbs, the preposition tends to denote and/or modify the action or nature of the verb. The **Pronoun/Noun Rule** states that if the phrasal verb is separable **Pronouns** and **Nouns** can go between the verb and the preposition; however, only the **Noun** form can follow a preposition.

Correct: Pick up **the kids**. **Incorrect:** Pick up **them**.

Correct: Pick **the kids** up. Correct: Pick **them** up.

Inseparable phrasal verbs are transitive and particle must attach itself to the object. With these verbs the particle tends to reflect the relationship of the action towards the object and not of the verb itself.

Correct: I believe in **you**. **Incorrect:** I believe **you** in.

Correct: He won't wait on **me**. **Incorrect:** He won't wait **me** on.

3. TRANSITIVITY:

Some phrasal verbs can have both a transitive **and** intransitive meaning. Compare the following pairs:

He shows off a lot.

He shows his work off a lot.

He hung up.

He hung it up.

I wound up here.

I wound my watch up.

My car broke down.

I broke my car down.

He kept it on.

He kept on.

He blew it up.

He blew up.

Intransitive phrasal verbs can sometimes take on an object, but **may** require another preposition.

Get in (the car).

He cheered up (**No Object Allowed**).

She filled in (**for** the teacher).

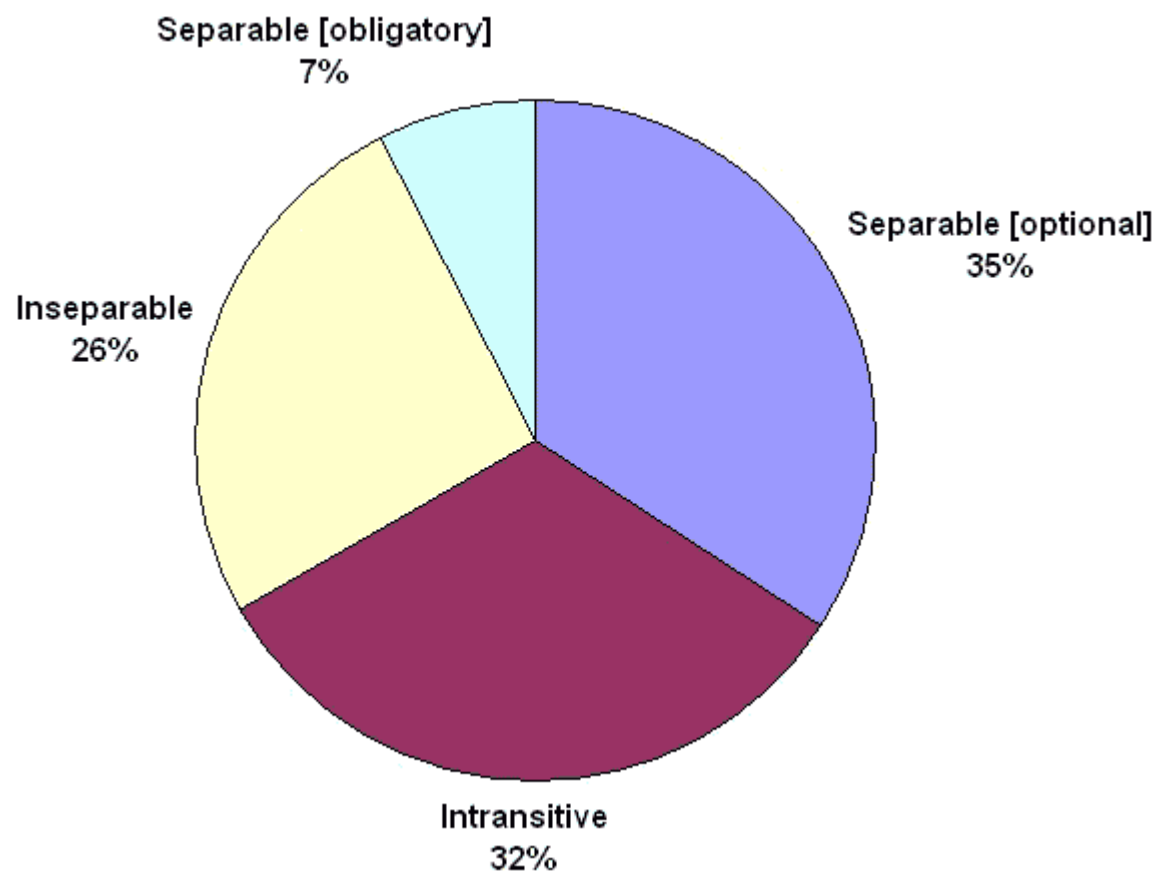
He backed down (**from** his promise).

She dropped out (**of** school).

I ran out (**of** food).

He caught up (**on** his homework).

He caught on (**to** the problem).



<http://www.usingenglish.com/speaking-out/separable-inseparable-phrasal-verbs.html>