

PHRASAL / MULTI-WORD VERBS

These are verbs with one or more other words which create a different meaning from the original verb. In fact, a meaning where there is often no connection with the original verb. Look at these examples:

put away = adverb
look for = preposition
put up with = both

Because they are verbs, you can use them like you would any other verb – in the present, past, future, etc. You conjugate the verb part normally, but the other word doesn't change its form.

Often the meaning is idiomatic. This means they can be difficult to learn. They are though very common, especially in spoken and when using informal English. Some can have many different meanings depending on the context. Look at these examples with pick up:

Pick up that book. = to lift something with your hand from the floor.
Please, pick up all the things in your room. = to organise your things.
The airport van picked up its passengers. = to collect people.
I picked up this ring in the sale. = to buy something.
He picks up foreign languages fairly easily. = to acquire knowledge.

Phrasal verbs can be transitive and intransitive like any other verb. Transitive (action) verbs are verbs that must have an object to receive that action. For example:

He gave up **smoking** two years ago. = give up (finish, stop a habit)
We've put off **the meeting** for a week. = put off (postpone, move to a later time)

An intransitive verb does not have an object. They are also action verbs, but they do not have an object to receive the action:

After a bad year things are starting to look up. = look up (get better, improve)

Some of these verbs are also separable (the verb / preposition can be separated, putting the object in the middle). There are several ways you can do this, but usually the object comes between the verb and the particle:

She looked up the word in her dictionary.
She looked it up in her dictionary.

Others are inseparable (the object must come at the end because the verb / preposition must stay together). In these verbs, the object comes after the particle. For example:

She got on the bus.