



‘Get ahead’ in business meetings with these English phrasal verbs

Most of us get up every morning to prepare for our workday. When we leave our homes, we may get on a bus or train, and at the end of our commute we get off again. In this age of working from home, many of us just sit down in front of our computers. Most people would never consider saying we ‘arise’ in the morning, or ‘board’ or ‘disembark’ a bus or train. Those verbs sound too formal for describing such everyday situations. Instead, we usually use phrasal verbs. We also use phrasal verbs for specific work situations, such as meetings.

by Christof Morrissey

What do we mean by phrasal verbs anyway?

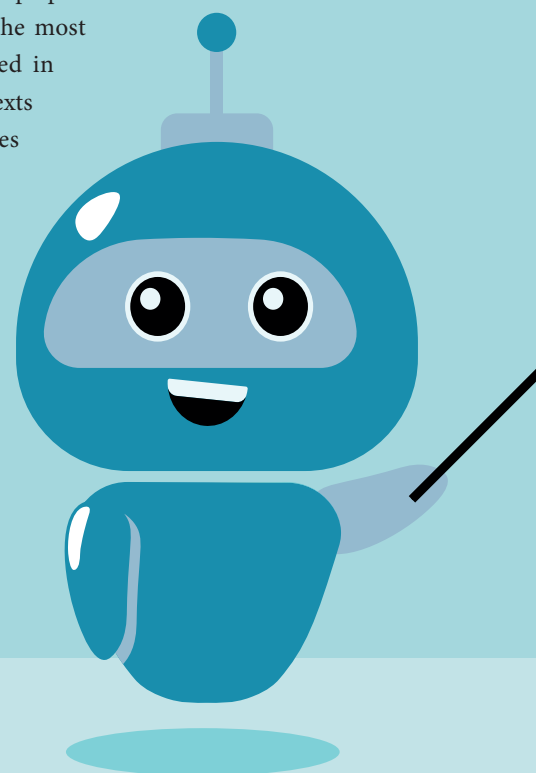
They are one-word verbs used together with other words, generally a preposition (such as ‘after’ in ‘look after’) or adverb (‘up’ in ‘sit up’), to form a phrase. The meaning of phrasal verbs is idiomatic; that is, the combination of words has a particular meaning which cannot be understood by translating the component words literally. For example, when you ‘look after’ someone’s children, you are not watching the kids as they leave the room but rather taking care of them while their parents are at work.

Why should you be familiar with them?

Phrasal verbs are an intrinsic part of everyday English, including business English. There are thousands of them! But don’t worry, nobody needs to learn them all. Many have a one-word synonym – see the introduction above – but these are usually more formal, and used mainly in writing. For example, it simply sounds more natural (and more personal, too) to look after those children than to ‘supervise’ or ‘safeguard’ them.

Which ones are most useful for business?

In principle, there are no phrasal verbs that are used strictly in work situations – nor are there any that are off-limits for business. But some of the most widely used are based on very common English verbs such as ‘get’, ‘go’ or ‘take’ that are paired with different prepositions or adverbs. Some of the most common ones are used in business meeting contexts below; see which ones you know!



Complete the sentences from business meetings by filling the gaps with phrasal verbs that are synonyms of the verbs or phrases in parentheses. Combine the ordinary verbs in the ovals with the prepositions or adverbs in the boxes. Make sure the verbs are in the correct tense.

break**into | off | up**

- The two companies were looking to start a joint venture but they couldn't agree on a marketing strategy, so they _____ (discontinued) negotiations.
- The latest news is that the federal government may _____ (disband) the giant tech companies if they continue to behave like a cartel.
- We're confident that this model will help us _____ (penetrate) the American market for electric vehicles.

get**ahead | into | through**

- Okay everybody, we still need to _____ (address) several more items on the agenda, so let's move on to the next point.
- As you know, we're always looking for ways to _____ of (outdistance) the competition.
- I'd rather not _____ (discuss) all the details right now, Sally. I can email you the exact figures after the meeting.

go**ahead | on | over**

- Before I _____ (examine) the sales figures from the third quarter, let's take a moment to review what our targets were.
- _____ (You can begin), Frank, tell us about your experience as Marketing Director for the Baltic states.
- Should we take a short break or would everyone prefer just to _____ (continue)?

take**off | out | over**

- This range of products struggled for years, but once we launched our viral video ad campaign, sales really _____.
- It's common in the aerospace and defence industries for large conglomerates to _____ smaller companies.
- To cover our start-up operating costs for the first two years, we intend to _____ a €30,000 loan.

Answers: 1. broke off; 2. break up; 3. break into; 4. get through; 5. get ahead; 6. get into; 7. go over; 8. Go ahead; 9. go on; 10. took off; 11. take over; 12. take out

Vokabeltraining

commute
Pendelstrecke

conglomerate
Mischkonzern

to disembark
aussteigen

intrinsic
wesentlich

parentheses
Klammern

