

THE SPEAK CLEARLY METHOD

FREE REFERENCE GUIDE

50

# Phrasal Verbs You'll Hear This Week at Work

*Not a thousand. The ones that actually come up — grouped by the moment you'll need them.*

meetings

email

projects

problems

time

people

*You don't have to lose your accent.*

***You have to be understood.***

# Why 50, and not 1,000

English has around nine thousand phrasal verbs. Most books on the subject try to teach you four hundred, a thousand, sometimes more.

They are thorough. They are also heavy, and almost nobody finishes them — which is a rational response to being handed a thousand words that each have five or six meanings.

## What the counting actually shows

Researchers who have measured which phrasal verbs people really use found something useful: a relatively small group — around a hundred and fifty — accounts for the great majority of all phrasal verb use in real English. And most of those have just one or two dominant meanings that cover nearly every time you'll meet them.

The long tail is real. It is also a tail. You do not need it yet.

So this guide gives you fifty — the ones that come up at work, in the situations where you'll need them, with the workplace meaning only. We have left things out on purpose. That is the method, not a shortcut.

## How to read the list

↔ can be separated by its object: turn down the offer / turn the offer down

→ cannot be separated: look after the client (never: look the client after)

⚠ One rule with no exceptions: with it, them, him, her — a separable verb **MUST** split.

☐ Turn it down. ☐ Turn down it.

Tip: stress the particle, not the verb. Follow UP, not FOLLOW up. It is a small change that makes a surprising difference to how natural you sound.

# In the meeting

|    | PHRASAL VERB        | ↔ → | MEANING AT WORK     | HEARD AS                       |
|----|---------------------|-----|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 01 | <b>bring up</b>     | ↔   | raise a topic       | "Can I bring up the timeline?" |
| 02 | <b>go over</b>      | →   | review in detail    | "Let's go over the numbers."   |
| 03 | <b>run through</b>  | →   | review quickly      | "I'll run through the agenda." |
| 04 | <b>touch on</b>     | →   | mention briefly     | "I'll touch on that later."    |
| 05 | <b>point out</b>    | ↔   | draw attention to   | "I should point out..."        |
| 06 | <b>jump in</b>      | →   | interrupt, politely | "Can I jump in here?"          |
| 07 | <b>come back to</b> | →   | return to later     | "Let's come back to that."     |
| 08 | <b>sum up</b>       | ↔   | summarise           | "Let me sum up."               |
| 09 | <b>wrap up</b>      | ↔   | finish              | "Let's wrap up there."         |
| 10 | <b>run over</b>     | →   | exceed the time     | "We're running over."          |

# Email and messages

|    | PHRASAL VERB          | ↔ → | MEANING AT WORK         | HEARD AS                         |
|----|-----------------------|-----|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 11 | <b>reach out (to)</b> | →   | make contact            | "I'll reach out to them."        |
| 12 | <b>follow up</b>      | →   | check or chase after    | "Just following up on this."     |
| 13 | <b>get back to</b>    | →   | reply to                | "I'll get back to you today."    |
| 14 | <b>loop in</b>        | ↔   | add to the conversation | "Looping in the design team."    |
| 15 | <b>copy in</b>        | ↔   | include on a message    | "I've copied in Marco."          |
| 16 | <b>send out</b>       | ↔   | distribute              | "I'll send it out today."        |
| 17 | <b>chase up</b>       | ↔   | ask again □□□□          | "Can you chase up the invoice?"  |
| 18 | <b>sign off on</b>    | →   | formally approve        | "Legal needs to sign off on it." |

# Getting things done

|    | PHRASAL VERB        | ↔ → | MEANING AT WORK         | HEARD AS                      |
|----|---------------------|-----|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 19 | <b>take on</b>      | ↔   | accept work             | "She's taken on the project." |
| 20 | <b>kick off</b>     | ↔   | begin                   | "We kicked off on Monday."    |
| 21 | <b>put together</b> | ↔   | create, assemble        | "I'll put together a plan."   |
| 22 | <b>carry out</b>    | ↔   | perform, execute        | "We carried out the tests."   |
| 23 | <b>hand over</b>    | ↔   | transfer to someone     | "I'll hand it over Friday."   |
| 24 | <b>catch up on</b>  | →   | clear a backlog         | "Catching up on emails."      |
| 25 | <b>keep up with</b> | →   | maintain the pace       | "Are we keeping up?"          |
| 26 | <b>fall behind</b>  | →   | become late             | "Testing has fallen behind."  |
| 27 | <b>tie up</b>       | ↔   | finish the last details | "Tying up loose ends."        |

## When it goes wrong

|    | PHRASAL VERB        | ↔ → | MEANING AT WORK     | HEARD AS                   |
|----|---------------------|-----|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 28 | <b>come up</b>      | →   | arise unexpectedly  | "Something's come up."     |
| 29 | <b>run into</b>     | →   | encounter a problem | "We've run into an issue." |
| 30 | <b>hold up</b>      | ↔   | delay               | "It's held up testing."    |
| 31 | <b>sort out</b>     | ↔   | resolve □□□□        | "We'll sort it out today." |
| 32 | <b>figure out</b>   | ↔   | work out □□□□       | "I'll figure it out."      |
| 33 | <b>look into</b>    | →   | investigate         | "I'll look into it."       |
| 34 | <b>work out</b>     | ↔   | solve or calculate  | "We worked out a fix."     |
| 35 | <b>fall through</b> | →   | fail to happen      | "The deal fell through."   |

# Time and the calendar

|    | PHRASAL VERB         | ↔ → | MEANING AT WORK         | HEARD AS                    |
|----|----------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 36 | <b>put off</b>       | ↔   | postpone                | "We've put off the launch." |
| 37 | <b>push back</b>     | ↔   | move to a later date    | "Push it back to Friday."   |
| 38 | <b>bring forward</b> | ↔   | move to an earlier date | "Can we bring it forward?"  |
| 39 | <b>fit in</b>        | ↔   | find time for           | "Can you fit me in?"        |
| 40 | <b>free up</b>       | ↔   | make time available     | "That frees up Thursday."   |
| 41 | <b>run out of</b>    | →   | have none left          | "We've run out of time."    |

## Deciding

|    | PHRASAL VERB        | ↔ → | MEANING AT WORK     | HEARD AS                     |
|----|---------------------|-----|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 42 | <b>come up with</b> | →   | generate an idea    | "She came up with the fix."  |
| 43 | <b>put forward</b>  | ↔   | propose             | "Can I put forward an idea?" |
| 44 | <b>rule out</b>     | ↔   | eliminate an option | "I wouldn't rule it out."    |
| 45 | <b>go with</b>      | →   | choose              | "Let's go with option B."    |

## People and teams

|    | PHRASAL VERB             | ↔ → | MEANING AT WORK        | HEARD AS                        |
|----|--------------------------|-----|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 46 | <b>report to</b>         | →   | have as your manager   | "I report to Sofia."            |
| 47 | <b>take over</b>         | ↔   | assume control of      | "Tom's taking over."            |
| 48 | <b>fill in for</b>       | →   | temporarily replace    | "I'm filling in for Marco."     |
| 49 | <b>check in with</b>     | →   | briefly consult        | "I'll check in with her."       |
| 50 | <b>step up</b>           | →   | take on responsibility | "He really stepped up."         |
| 51 | <b>bring up to speed</b> | ↔   | give the background    | "Can you bring me up to speed?" |

## BEFORE YOU USE THEM

# The Danger Zone

Some of these look almost identical and mean completely different things. Mixing them up is memorable for the wrong reasons.

### ONE WORD APART

**take on**

accept work

**hand in your report**

submit it

**step in**

help

**follow up**

check afterwards

**push back the meeting**

delay it

**pass it on**

forward it

**fall behind**

become late

**sign off on it**

approve it

**take over**

remove it from someone — starts arguments

**hand in your notice**

resign △

**step down**

resign from your role △

**follow through**

actually do what you promised

**push back on the idea**

disagree with it

**pass on that**

decline it

**fall out**

have an argument △

**sign off**

say goodbye

### And one that has ended meetings early

get on with = continue, or have a good relationship. □

get off with = △ romantic. “I’m getting on with the new starter” is what you meant.

# How to actually learn these

Fifty is not a list to memorise. It is a list to use — and using one properly is worth more than reading twenty.

## 1 Learn it in a sentence, never alone

“Take on” means nothing. “She’s taken on the client project” means something.

## 2 One meaning first

The workplace one. Add the others later, or never.

## 3 Stress the particle

Follow UP, not FOLLOW up. Small change, surprising difference.

## 4 Test the pronoun

Can you say “turn it down”? Then it separates ↔. Only “look after them”? Then it doesn’t →.

## 5 Use it within 48 hours

In a real email, to a real person. A phrasal verb you have only read is not yours yet.

### A week that works

Pick five — one from each section. Use one a day, in something real.

By Friday you will own five phrasal verbs properly, which is five more than most people get from reading a list of four hundred.

### The tiny grammar rule worth memorising

With it, them, him, her — a separable phrasal verb MUST split.

□ Turn it down. Fill her in. Bring them up to speed.

□ Turn down it. Fill in her.

That one rule removes the most common phrasal verb mistake in professional English.

# There are a hundred more

This guide has fifty. The book has around a hundred and fifty — grouped by situation, with the phrases for meetings, video calls, email, deadlines, disagreement and interviews around them.

## Speak Clearly at Work

COMING SOON

*The English That Actually Comes Up at Work*

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***Not a thousand words. The fifty you'll use before Friday.***

THE SPEAK CLEARLY METHOD

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**Fewer words.  
Used properly.**

*Speak as yourself — at work, too.*

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