

TEACHER'S CORNER – DECEMBER 2016

PHRASAL VERBS

Phrasal verbs are perhaps the best-known example of the difference between formal and informal English. Phrasal verbs are never used in academic writing, yet phrasal verbs seem to be everywhere in spoken English. Without them, our students' spoken English can appear too formal. Our students need phrasal verbs to make their spoken English more natural and conversational. Yet, for our students, the number of phrasal verbs and the rules around phrasal verbs can make learning them intimidating.

Do I *pick up*, *pick on*, *pick at*, or *pick over*? Do I *pick it up* or *pick up it*? Phrasal verbs can be overwhelming; however, they are governed by a few basic rules.

1. Phrasal verbs are either *transitive* or *intransitive*.
 - a. A transitive verb requires a direct object.
 - i. For example: *He drove the car*. He drove what? The car.
 - b. An intransitive verb does not require a direct object.
 - i. For example: *She ran this morning*.
2. Most transitive phrasal verbs can have the noun go after or between the verb and the particle. If a noun can go between the verb and the particle that phrasal verb is *separable*.
 - a. For example: *He never turns off the lights* or *He never turns the lights off*.
However, if the direct object is a pronoun, it must come between the verb and particle.
 - b. Incorrect: *He never turns off them*. Correct: *He never turns them off*.
3. Some transitive phrasal verbs are *inseparable* and a noun cannot come between the verb and the particle.
 - a. Correct: *We need to check out of the hotel*. Incorrect: *We need to check the hotel out of*.
4. Intransitive phrasal verbs never have an object. To include an object we have to use another preposition.
 - a. For example: *I decided to sign up **for** the school play*.

In this month's Teacher's Corner, we will check out the world of phrasal verbs by practicing them in specific contexts. Each week will provide students a chance to play with and practice phrasal verbs through inductive learning. In inductive learning, students are provided an example and from that example learn rules, definitions, or meanings. After students have practiced using the phrasal verbs and learned the rules through working with specific examples of phrasal verbs, they will begin to understand the rules of phrasal verbs. For this month's Teacher's Corner, it is recommended to let students practice first and then at the end of the month provide them with the rules listed above. You may be surprised at how much of the rules students pick up through inductive learning!

Each activity this month provides students a context to learn the meanings of specific phrasal verbs and opportunities to practice these phrasal verbs in the same context.

- Week 1 – Phrasal Verb Quiz Game
- Week 2 – Planning a Party
- Week 3 – House Party
- Week 4 – Vacation Travel



Week one kicks off the month with a quiz game on phrasal verbs. Week two encourages students to plan the perfect party with their classmates. In week three, students learn phrasal verbs while cleaning up after a party. Finally, this month's Teacher's Corner concludes with students taking some time off and planning a relaxing vacation.

For more on phrasal verbs check out: [The Lighter Side Train of Thought](#)

For more on recognizing noun position check out: [Nouns on the Job Market: An Approach for Recognizing Noun Position](#)

For more on inductive learning check out: [Discovering Grammar with Consciousness-Raising Tasks](#)