Prepositions governed by verbs

Certain verbs occur with specific prepositions, that is, the verb consists of both a verb and a preposition. One characteristic of such verb plus preposition combinations is that the meaning of the combination is often not obvious from the meaning of the verb and the meaning of the preposition involved.

You shouldn't laugh at him. He's just like that.

For example, the meaning of laugh at ‘to ridicule’ is not just a combination of the individual meanings of laugh and at. Thus, at least in terms of their meanings, such combinations have to be learned one by one.

The chair said she would see to the problem next week.
The dog watched for his owner to come home every afternoon.
The warehouse was turned into a church.
Don't depend on Bill for help.
Ask for help if you need it.

Verbs with attached particles (Phrasal verbs)

Verbs also occur with attached particles. Particles are forms that, despite looking like prepositions, differ from them in at least two ways: Prepositions are relatively immobile; particles, in sentences with direct objects, occur either before or after the direct object.

I don't like to break in new sandals.
I don’t like to break new sandals in.

Pick the book up.
Pick up the book.

What is important is to recognize that in break new sandals in, break in is a unit. Learners of English have to learn these units one at a time.

In verb plus preposition combinations, the preposition is unstressed;

Don’t pick on your brother.

but, in verb plus particle combinations, the particle is stressed.

Don’t put on your shoes.

For many, hearing these stress differences is a problem. Fortunately, stress is only of marginal importance.

Like the verb plus preposition combinations, one characteristic of phrasal verbs is that the meaning of the combination is often not obvious from the meaning of the verb and the meaning of the particle involved.

I don’t like to break in new sandals.

For example, this meaning of to break in is not just a combination of the individual meanings of break and in. Thus, for the learner, such combinations have to be acquired one by one.

**Exercise 15.1: Phrasal verbs**

Instructions:

A. For the sentences with direct objects, rewrite the sentence with the particle in its other possible location.
Chapter 15: Verbs with attached particles (Phrasal verbs)

Don't *put on* your shoes.

===> Don't *put* your shoes *on*.

B. For the passive sentences, rewrite the sentence as active, putting the particle to the right of the direct object.

The package was *shipped out* by the company.

===> The company *shipped* the package *out*.

1. I *wear out* my sandals every six months or so.

2. *Put out* all smoking material.

3. *Look over* this exam carefully and then answer the questions.

4. The criminals were *turned in* by their friends.

5. The constant work *tired out* the athletes.

6. The Volkswagen was *cut off* by the truck.

7. *Clear up* your own problems before you criticize others.

8. Can you *work out* the last example?

9. The noise of the television *broke down* her concentration.

10. The chemistry lab was *blown up* by those freshmen.

11. *Draw up* a proposal and we'll look at it.
EXERCISE 15.2: PHRASAL VERBS

Underline the verbs in the following pairs of sentences. What is the difference? Hint: The verbs are not identical in the (a) and the (b) sentences.

1. a. The politician played up the scandal.
   b. The children played up the street.

2. a. The driver ran down the pedestrian.
   b. The jogger ran down the street.

3. a. Jeff turned in his cousin.
   b. His cousin turned in the side street.

EXERCISE 15.3: PHRASAL VERSUS PREPOSITIONAL VERBS

First, underline the main verb plus the related preposition or particle in each sentence. Then, decide if the related element is a preposition or a particle.

1. We can't put off our departure any longer.
2. The play took in four hundred dollars last night.
3. Have you disposed of your bicycle yet?
4. The company has shut down the factory for a week.
5. I'll sell off the remaining property.
6. You can't laugh at such a man.
7. Hold off your creditors for another week.
8. If you close the windows, you will shut out the heat.
9. The officials will run off the race at ten o'clock.
10. We were laughed at for our pains.
11. This business can be disposed of in five minutes.
12. The boxer knocked out his opponent in the first round.
13. I can't seem to work out the problem.
14. Don't leave out the last two questions.
15. She put up with him for years.
16. Dr. Thompson has taken over Dr. Harlow's practice.
17. How do you laugh off such criticism?
18. You surely won't sneeze at such a chance, will you?
19. If you put up the money, we can start work at once.
20. But until someone puts up some money, we can't begin.
21. The sheriff quickly and effectively put down the riot.
22. I shall look over the applications immediately.
23. Several of his neighbors helped out Mr. Jaffy last week.
24. Soon Grandfather will turn over the business to me.
25. Sam looked into the matter of the oil leases.

**Ouch! That hurts**

Ouch!
   What’s the matter?
I stubbed my toe.
      Oh, that hurts, that hurts.
I know that hurts.

Ouch!
   What’s the matter?
I bit my tongue.
      Oh, that hurts, that hurts.
I know that hurts.

Ouch!
   What’s the matter?
I got a cramp in my foot.
      Oh, that hurts, that hurts.
I know that hurts.

Ouch!
   What’s the matter now?
I bumped into the table,
tripped on the stairs,
slipped on the carpet,
fell over the chairs.

         Gee! You’re clumsy today!

Carolyn Graham. 1978. *Jazz Chants*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 34-35. [Do not be deceived by the publication date. It is still in print and still selling well.]
[Sounds: final \(-ed\) pronounced /-d/, final \(-ed\) pronounced /-t/, final \(-s\) in chairs, and stairs pronounced /-z/]  
[Note the use of the prepositions in the phrases cramp in my foot, bumped into, tripped on, slipped on, fell over]  

Terms  

To check yourself, see if you can briefly describe each of the following terms and illustrate it in a phrase or sentence (underlining the relevant part).  

“governed” prepositions:  
governed by nouns  
governed by adjectives  
governed by verbs  

phrasal verbs (=verbs with attached particles)  
particle  
verbs with attached prepositions  

Answers to Exercise 15.1:  
1. I wear my sandals out every six months or so.  
2. Put all smoking material out.  
3. Look this exam over carefully and then answer the questions.  
4. Their friends turned the criminals in.  
5. The constant work tired the athletes out.  
6. The truck cut the Volkswagen off.  
7. Clear your own problems up before you criticize others.
8. Can you work the last example out?
9. The noise of the television broke her concentration down.
10. Those freshmen blew the chemistry lab up.
11. Draw up a proposal and we'll look at it.

Answers to Exercise 15.2:

1. a. The politician played up the scandal.
   The verb is played up; the scandal is a direct object.
   b. The children played up the street.
   The verb is played; up is the preposition in the preposition phrase up the street.
2. a. The driver ran down the pedestrian.
   The verb is ran down; the pedestrian is a direct object.
   b. The jogger ran down the street.
   The verb is ran; down is the preposition in the preposition phrase down the street.
3. a. Jeff turned in his cousin.
   The verb is turned in; this cousin is a direct object.
   b. His cousin turned in the side street.
   The verb is turned; in is the preposition in the preposition phrase in the side street.

Answers to Exercise 15.3:

1. We can't put off our departure any longer. (particle)
2. The play took in four hundred dollars last night. (particle)
3. Have you disposed of your bicycle yet? (preposition)
4. The company has shut down the factory for a week. (particle)
5. I'll sell off the remaining property. (particle)
6. You can't laugh at such a man. (preposition)
7. Hold off your creditors for another week. (particle)
8. If you close the windows, you will shut out the heat. (particle)
9. The officials will run off the race at ten o'clock. (particle)
10. We were laughed at for our pains. (preposition)
11. This business can be disposed of in five minutes. (preposition)
12. The boxer knocked out his opponent in the first round. (particle)
13. I can't seem to work out the problem. (particle)
14. Don't leave out the last two questions. (particle)
15. She put up with him for years. (both a particle and a preposition)
16. Dr. Thompson has taken over Dr. Harlow's practice. (particle)
17. How do you laugh off such criticism? (particle)
18. You surely won't sneeze at such a chance, will you? (preposition)
19. If you put up the money, we can start work at once. (particle)
20. But until someone puts up some money, we can't begin. (particle)
21. The sheriff quickly and effectively put down the riot. (particle)
22. I shall look over the applications immediately. (particle)
23. Several of his neighbors helped out Mr. Jaffa last week. (particle)
24. Soon Grandfather will turn over the business to me. (particle)
25. Sam looked into the matter of the oil leases. (preposition)
Chapter 15: Terms