

POSSIBILITIES OF WORD ORDER IN PHRASAL VERBS

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A particular difficulty experienced by learners of English as a foreign language is the handling of phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs have attracted the attention of many scholars.

It is worth mentioning the fact that the number of opinions concerning this type of verbs is as great as the number of linguists dealing with them.

Various interpretations of phrasal verbs are due to the diverse understanding of the second element's nature, which has not received a generally accepted interpretation yet. Opinions differ as to how the second component of a phrasal verb should be defined. It is usually given various names depending on the author's views on this subject.

Working with a lot of reference books we have noticed that English authors for their convenience use the term "**phrasal verbs**" in an extended sense, as a so-called "**umbrella**" term, to cover not only phrasal verbs proper but also prepositional and phrasal-preposition verbs [1], at the same time, in view of the absence of a universally accepted term for the second (and third) element of these combinations, they use the word "**particle**" to include not only those of adverbial but also of prepositional character.

Most phrasal verbs are nor informal, slang, or improper for educated speech or formal writing. Exactly the opposite is true – most phrasal verbs are acceptable at all levels of spoken or written English. In fact, for many of the phrasal verbs there is no alternative to the phrasal verb – there is no other way to say it.

Some phrasal verbs are very easy to understand. For example, it is not difficult to understand *sit down* or *come in* because their meanings are obvious. But many phrasal verbs are very **idiomatic**. For example, every beginning-level student learns what the words *call*, *run*, *off*, and *out* mean, but that does not help the student to know that *call off* means *cancel* or that *run out* means *use all of something*.

To the learner of English there is much difficulty in finding the right place and function of adverbs like *in*, *out*, *up*, *away*, *back*, *down*, *on*, *off*, etc., and some of these are frequently confused with prepositions. For instance, we can **take our hat off** or **take off our hat** or even **take it off** but we do not **take off it**.

It should be emphasized that in order to properly employ the right word in the right place the learner has to know at least two things, namely, **the exact idea** expressed by each individual word in any combination of words, and **the right way of combining** the individual words into proper word combination.

As to the **exact idea** expressed by each individual word in any combination of words, the learner should not confuse what is called "**real adverbs**" with "**adverbial particles**" which merge with the verb in a phrasal verb to express a single semantically indivisible idea [2], because namely this serves as a reliable linguistic criterion to check out all the **phrasal verbs**.

As to **the right way of combining** the individual words into proper word combinations, the learner should know that there are a number of restrictions that characterize phrasal verbs from free word groups and he or she should know them by heart.

It should be assumed that phrasal verbs are either **separable** or **nonseparable**. Unfortunately, there is no rule that will help the learner to look at a phrasal verb and always know whether it is separable or nonseparable.

Separable phrasal verbs can be separated by their object. When the object is a noun, it is usually entirely optional whether the object is placed between the verb and the particle or placed after the particle like in the following examples: I **took my shoes off**. / I **took off my shoes**.

However, when a pronoun is used instead of a noun, the pronoun must be placed between the verb and the particle: I **took them off**. / ~~I took off them~~.

It is worth mentioning the fact that every combination may have several idiomatic meaning depending on the words that precede and follow it, i.e. its collocations. Good examples provide the collocations of *take something off* which are numerous and provide several different meanings:

1. *take weight (pounds, inches, surplus fat) off*, i.e. get rid of, lose.
2. *take a bus (train, flight) off*, i.e. with draw from service
3. *take tax (surcharge, duty, a sum of money) off*, i.e. remove.

Nonseparable phrasal verbs cannot be separated by their object: He **ran into** a tree. / ~~He ran a tree into.~~
This rule is well illustrated by the same verb **take off**, but as a nonseparable one.

1. *The aircraft (plane, helicopter) took off.* - i.e. left the ground.
2. *The thief (boy, persons or animals) took off.* - i.e. ran away, moved off in a hurry.
3. *The sales (product, economy) took off.* - i.e. began to make definite improvement or profit.

However, perhaps the main source of difficulty consists not in knowing the meanings of the combinations, but knowing how the combinations are used correctly in sentences. One important point should be mentioned here. Possibilities of word order in the combinations may cause trouble. This is a matter of determining whether the verb is followed by a preposition or a particle whether it is separable or non separable. This is in many cases a decision which is difficult to make. Consider the following sentences:

- E.g. **A.** 1. *I read the letter through.*
2. *I read through the letter.*

- B.** 1. *I saw the plan through.*
2. *I saw through the plan.*

The differences in meaning and use may not be immediately apparent to the learner. In set **A**, *though* is a particle (adverb) in both sentences, although it looks confusingly like a preposition in *A2*. Because it is a particle (adverb) in both, there is no difference in meaning. In set **B**, *though* is a particle (adverb) in 1 and a preposition in 2. There is a difference of meaning in the two sentences. *B1* means "I preserved until the plan was satisfactory completed", and *B2* means "I recognized the deception of the plan".

It therefore becomes clear that in order to understand and use phrasal verbs correctly it is necessary to determine whether the verb is transitive or intransitive; whether there is one or two particles; whether the particle(s) is (are) adverbial or prepositional.

Taking into consideration these factors, **A.P. Cowie** and **R. Mackin** [3] proposed a classification of phrasal verbs which became generally recognized. This classification based on purely semantic principles gives three categories or types of phrasal verbs.

- Type I. Verb + Adverb;**
Type II. Verb + Preposition;
Type III. Verb + Adverb + Preposition.

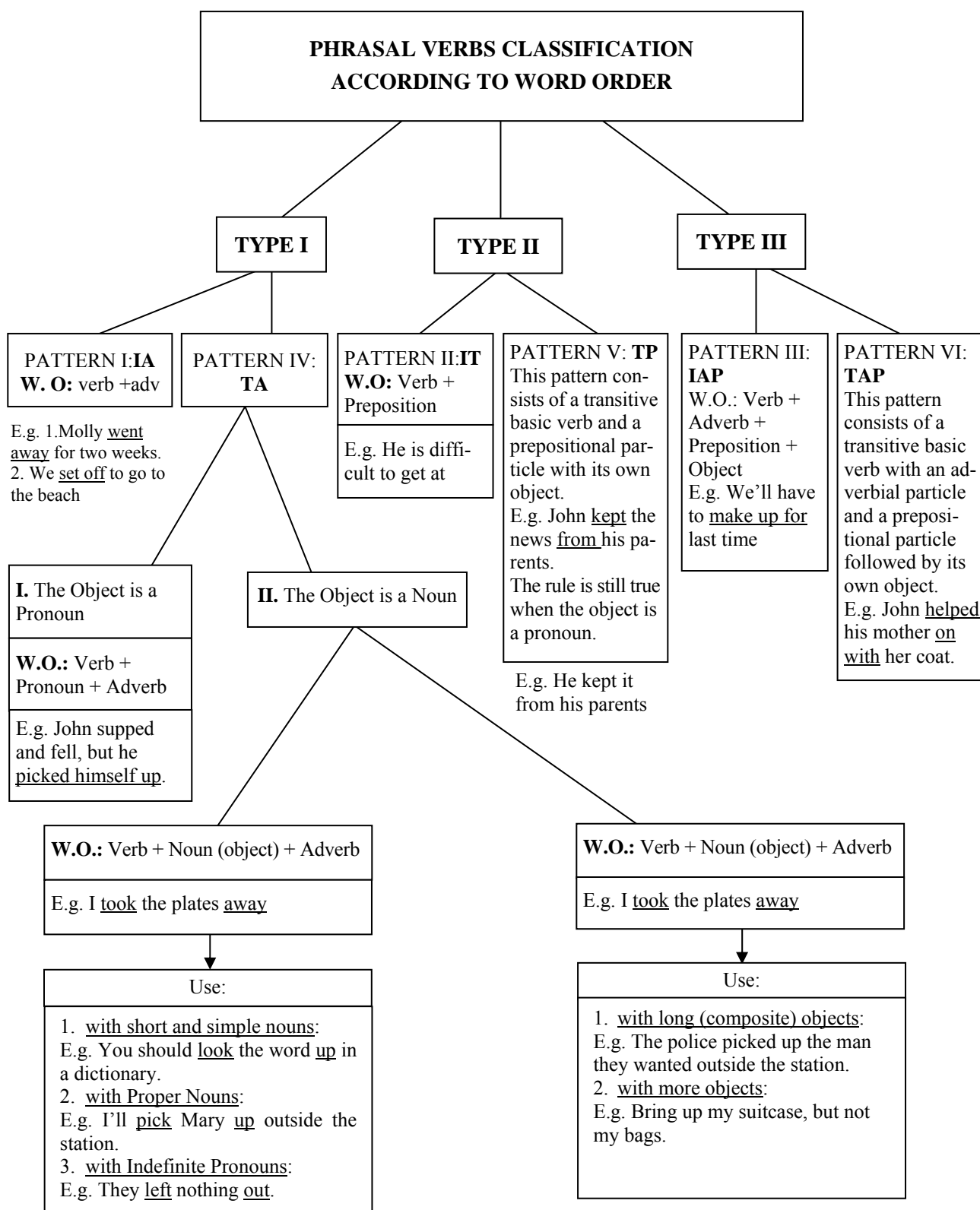
According to this scheme of phrasal verbs, the three types of phrasal verbs give six basic grammatical patterns: three for transitive verbs (*i.e. with a direct object*) and three for intransitive verbs (*i.e. without a direct object*). See Supplement.

1. *Intransitive verb + Adverbial Particle;*
2. *Intransitive verb + Prepositional Particle;*
3. *Intransitive verb + Adverbial Particle + Prepositional Particle;*
4. *Transitive verb + Adverbial Particle;*
5. *Transitive verb + Prepositional Particle;*
6. *Transitive verb + Adverbial Particle + Prepositional Particle.*

I. Intransitive verb with an Adverbial Particle: IA

Verbs like these are always inseparable – the verb and the adverb always stay together and can never be separated by other words. This type of verbs is very common with the verbs of motion (go, come, run, walk, drive, etc.) e.g. Molly **went away** for two weeks.

The purpose of the adverb is to change the meaning of the verb. These verbs can often be replaced by one - word verbs, which are more formal. e.g. to fall out – *to quarrel*, to bring up – *to educate*, to take in – *to deceive*, to cut down – *to reduce*, to look down – *to despise* etc.



Thus, if the object is a noun phrase, we can move the adverb after it, if the object is a personal pronoun, it must come before the adverb. This type is the only separable one.

I. VERB + ADVERB + OBJECT

E.g. We were all delighted when we heard you'd **got through** your exam.

II. VERB + OBJECT + ADVERB

E.g. Her mother's support **got her through** her depression.

V. Transitive verbs with prepositional particles: TP

A prepositional verb has always an object and the object always comes after the preposition. Verbs like these are inseparable – the object of the verb cannot come between the verb and the preposition. This rule is still true when the object is a pronoun.

E.g. ~~The instructor put my sister off swimming.~~ / ~~The instructor put her off swimming.~~

VI. Transitive verbs with adverbial and prepositional particles: TAP

Verbs like these are inseparable – the three parts of the verb always stay together, whether the object is a pronoun or a noun. The preposition cannot change its position. It must come before the object. In a few cases the adverbial particle may precede the noun object of basic verb, if the object is short. The order remains the same when either one or both of the objects is a pronoun.

Verbs of this type are not used literally; they are colloquial. E.g. You cannot **get away from** the fact that the cost of living is always rising.

The conclusions can be drawn by analyzing the following sentences:

1. I knew what I wanted to say but I couldn't get over to anybody else.

2. It took me about a week to get over the accident. (E. Hemingway "Fiesta")

In the first example, **over** is an adverbial particle, this gives the possibility to assess that the verb "to get" and the particle "over" make up a semantic unit with an idiomatic meaning "to communicate, to convey".

According to the classification this verb belongs to the **IVth** pattern of phrasal verbs – **TA**.

In the second example **over** is a preposition which gives the possibility to assess that the verb "to get" make a semantic centre and the particle "over" only modifies or intensifies its meaning: "to recover from".

According to the classification it belongs to the **Vth** pattern of phrasal verbs – **TP**.

It is to be concluded that, sometimes the same phrasal verb has two or even more meanings. There are phrasal verbs that can be separated (that is, are separable) without changing their meaning, but there are phrasal verbs that cannot be separated. Sometimes the same verb can be both transitive and intransitive having notable differences of meanings, sometimes even surprising.

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