Section 10 special structures with verbs

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language notes
This Section deals with a small group of verbal structures that can be difficult for elementary students.

possible further activities
See the remarks on cartoons in the Introduction to the Teachers’ Notes.

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language notes
‘Get’ is a confusing verb, because its meaning depends on the structure it is used in. Students may use it wrongly before a noun to mean ‘become’, saying for instance *My father’s getting an old man’, or thinking that ‘She’s going to get a doctor’ means ‘She’s a medical student’ rather than ‘She’s going to call a doctor’. The most basic uses are taught and practised here; others are dealt with in the Intermediate and Advanced levels of the Oxford English Grammar Course. For have got, see page 11.

possible further activities
Listing activities Ask students to write five or more sentences using get about things they did yesterday, and three or more about things they didn’t do. (‘I got up late.’ ‘I got dressed.’ ‘I got a newspaper.’ ‘I didn’t get any letters.’ ‘I didn’t get married.’)

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language notes
Prepositional verbs like look at or listen to (page 141) may correspond to one-word verbs in students’ mother tongues, and in general practice may be needed before students can use the correct preposition easily where it is required:
*Listen me! *Look at! It’s snowing! *We arrive to London at 8.15.

Some students use the prepositional verbs happen and belong as if they were adjectives:
*What’s happen to Joe? *It’s belong (to) me.

Note that some prepositions, for example at and for, have two quite different pronunciations (‘weak’ and ‘strong’) depending on whether they are stressed or not. The ‘Pronunciation for grammar’ exercises for this Section give students practice in hearing and pronouncing weak forms.

possible further activities
Mime Individually or in groups, students mime the following actions:
looking at something
listening to something
thinking about something
talking to somebody
waiting for somebody/something
The actions must be reasonably easy to guess (e.g. waiting for a bus, but not waiting for the end of the world). The other students say what is being mimed. (‘You’re looking at a poster.’ ‘You’re waiting for your boyfriend.’)

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use. ➔ Section 10 continues
Travel  Get students to write a few sentences about a journey they have made, using some expressions with prepositions (e.g. wait for, get on/off, …).

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language notes

By ‘phrasal verbs’ we mean two-part verbs in which the second part is an adverb particle (e.g. break down, cut up, throw away). We don’t include verbs in which the second part is a preposition (e.g. look at, listen to, jump over); these are practised on page 141. Note that some adverb particles and prepositions have the same form (e.g. up, down, off, in). However, the meanings are often different: compare up in cut the potatoes up (= ‘completely’) and run up the hill (= ‘to a higher place’). The distinction between the two kinds of verb (and between a preposition and an adverb particle) may be hard for students to understand; at this level it is more important for them to use a few common two-part verbs correctly than to have a theoretical grasp of the point.

There are a few grammatical differences between phrasal and prepositional verbs, particularly to do with word order: for example we can say I cut the potatoes up, but not *I ran the hill up. (This is a good way to tell whether a particular combination is phrasal or prepositional.)

Many phrasal verbs are rather conversational in tone, and other one-word verbs may be preferred in a formal style: compare go on and continue, or turn up and arrive.

Students and teachers often regard phrasal verbs as a grammatical problem area, and spend a lot of time working on lists of them, studying the differences between, say, turn up, turn off, turn out, turn down etc, or turn up, give up, break up, hold up etc. Phrasal verbs may certainly need some special attention: if students don’t have a similar structure in their mother tongues, they are likely to avoid phrasal verbs and prefer one-word verbs. However, apart from the word-order question, we feel that phrasal verbs are best seen as vocabulary – just words which happen to have a space in the middle – and best learnt separately as they arise, like other kinds of vocabulary. Trying to learn turn up, turn off, turn out, turn down etc together is a bit like trying to learn lists of single words that begin or end in the same way (e.g. persuade, perform, perceive, permeate or institution, constitution, destitution, restitution): a guaranteed recipe for confusion.

possible further activities

Acting out phrasal verbs  This is quite a difficult exercise; students who like miming/acting may enjoy it. Run over the phrasal verbs on page 142 and make sure students know them all. Then give out cards with sentences containing phrasal verbs. Students have to act out their sentences (they can speak if they want to, but they can’t use the verb); the class has to say what each phrasal verb is. Some suggested sentences:

Come back!
Go away!
Hurry up!
You’re filling in a form.
You’re washing up.
You’re filling up (the car) with petrol.
You’re filling up a glass.
Look out!
You’re looking round (in a shop).
You’re waking up.
You’re switching the lights off.
You’re switching the TV on.
You’re giving up smoking.
Pick that thing up!
You’re putting clothes on.
You're taking clothes off.
You're cutting up onions.
You're cutting up wood.
You're tearing up a letter.

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language notes

Verbs with two objects may cause some difficulty to beginners: the structure with the indirect object first (e.g. *She gave me her phone number*) may seem strange to speakers of languages which don’t have a similar pattern. However, common examples of the structure (*send me …*, *give me …*, *tell me …* etc) are very frequent, and will help students to get used to the pattern. Look out for mistakes with verbs that don’t work like this:

*Can you explain me this word?*
*She suggested us a very good restaurant.*

The passive version of this structure (e.g. *I was given some useful advice*) is rare in other languages, and is strange and difficult for almost all students. We deal with this in *Oxford English Grammar Course Intermediate*.

possible further activities

*Presents* Students say what presents they gave other people for their birthdays or other occasions. (‘I gave my father some music for his birthday.’)

*Memory game (and vocabulary expansion)* Everybody in the class gives you something (as many different kinds of thing as possible). Make sure everybody knows the names of the various things. Then put the things where the students can’t see them. Students work in pairs and try to write sentences saying what everybody gave you. Can they remember everything? (‘Sandra gave you a lipstick. Peter gave you a pen. Lee gave you his watch …’)

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language notes

Word order in this structure may cause problems:

*I had X-rayed my back.*

And some students may use the wrong verb, or a completely different structure:

*I must let/make my raincoat cleaned.*

*I made repair my camera, but it still doesn’t work.*

possible further activities

*‘Having everything done’* Students imagine that they are very rich. They write sentences to say what they have done for them. (‘I have my bed made by the servants.’ ‘I have all my love letters written by my secretary.’)

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language notes

Imperatives are relatively unproblematic. Some students may not realise, however, that they are not generally used to ask for things politely. People whose first language is English may be offended by ‘requests’ beginning with ‘Please’ and an imperative. ‘Please tell me …’, for example, is a command, not a request.
possible further activities

‘Simon says’  This is an old children’s game. Give the class a very rapid series of (easy) instructions. If you say ‘Simon says’ before the instruction, they have to carry it out; if you don’t, they mustn’t do it. Anybody who makes a mistake is out – they can’t continue playing the game. How many people are still in after three minutes? You will need to prepare a lot of instructions (but some can be repeated). Examples:

  Stand up.
  Simon says ‘Stand up’.
  Simon says ‘Sit down’.
  Close your eyes.
  Touch your nose.
  Simon says ‘Open your mouth’.
  Pick up your pen.
  Go to sleep.

When you’ve played it once, do it the other way round: students give you instructions in turn. Or get them to do play the game in groups (for example with three of the group giving instructions in turn, and five carrying them out).

Directions  Get students to write (or say) directions from one well-known local place to another, using expressions from Exercise 2.

Instructions  Students (or you and the class together) write instructions for some simple action (e.g. boiling an egg, lighting a fire). Help with vocabulary.

possible further activities

Miming suggestions  Students take turns to make suggestions without speaking. The class say what they think the suggestion is. (‘Let’s play cards.’ ‘Let’s go swimming.’)