

EC Fundamentals

VOCABULARY

VOL. 1

An illustrated guide for English Learners

WHICH OR WITCH?



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HOMONYMS

What are homonyms?

'Homonyms' are a group of words that share spelling and pronunciation, but have a different meaning.

Lean



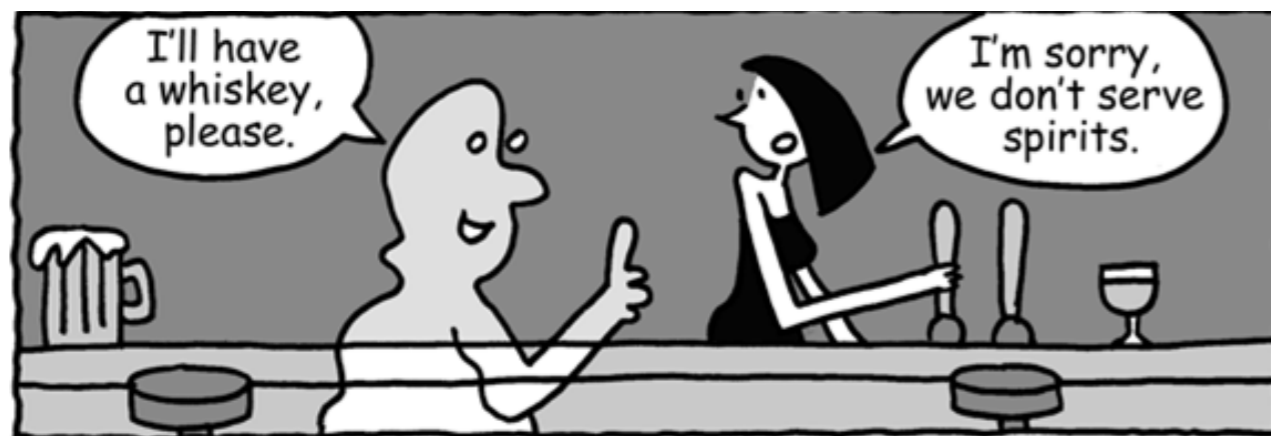
To **lean** is a **verb** which means to bend from a vertical position, just like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, but it can also be used as an **adjective** to describe a person who is really thin, or meat which contains very little fat. Let's look at a couple of examples to make sure that we've understood the difference:

E.g. Don't lean on that wall, it's not safe!

E.g. He has a muscular, lean body because he's always in the gym.

E.g. This meat is very lean, there's hardly any fat on it.

Spirit



The key to understanding this joke is the noun **spirit**. This word can mean either **ghost** or a **hard type of alcohol**, like whiskey and vodka. Here are a couple of clear examples:

E.g. I don't think **spirits** really exist. Ghosts only live in scary stories and films.

E.g. Our bar serves a great variety of wines and **spirits**. Which one would you like to try?

Rash



Rash (noun) is 'a medical problem that results in a lot of small red spots on the skin'. Rashes are often caused by allergies.

E.g. She got a rash on her arms after touching the cat. She must be allergic to them.

Rash (adjective) is a word used to describe someone doing something 'careless or unwise, without thinking'.

E.g. Deciding to quit your job after the argument was a rash decision. You should have calmed down first.

Lift



To **give (someone) a lift** means to 'provide transportation for someone' e.g. to take a person somewhere in your car. 'To give someone a ride' has the same meaning, but is used in American English.

E.g. I've got to go to the train station. Can you **give me a lift**?

E.g. Can you **give me a lift to work*** tomorrow? My car is being repaired.

*We use the preposition 'to + noun' to be specific about where a person needs to go.

'To give someone a lift' also means 'to make someone feel good' by saying kind words.

E.g. Seeing you may give her the lift she needs, she's been quite miserable lately.

Note: When we say '**the world is your oyster**' we mean 'you have the opportunity to get everything you want from life', it's a common idiom.

Bottle



In British **slang** the noun **bottle** can mean **courage** or **bravery**. If you **have bottle** you are brave and a risk taker.

E.g. It takes **a lot of bottle** to go skydiving.

Otherwise, in everyday speech, a **bottle (noun)** is a container from which you can drink something, like water or cola.

Horn



A **horn** (noun) is a 'hard, pointed, and often curved part that grows from the top of the head of some animals' like cows, goats and rhinos. In the cartoon, the cow has two horns on its head.

E.g. The bullfighter was almost hit by the bull's horns.

But a **horn** (noun) is also a 'device that makes a loud warning sound'. Cars, for example, have horns which let people know they are there.

E.g. There was a dog standing in the middle of the road. I had to blow my **horn** to make it move out of the way.

¹Slang (noun): A type of language which is very informal, more common in speech than writing. Typically specific to a particular culture or group of people.

Smell



Smell (noun) is used to identify a bad or unpleasant odour, but 'to smell' is a verb which means 'inhaling the odour/scent through the nose'. Let's take a look at two examples to help us understand the difference:

E.g. What's that awful **smell**? Someone open a window! (Noun)

E.g. **Smell** my new perfume. Do you like it? (Verb)

Click



In computing, **click** means 'to press a button on a mouse'. The word comes from the sound that's made when you click (it makes a clicking sound).

E.g. When you have chosen the file you want, click 'Open'.

We also use **click** when talking about relationships with other people. In this sense, 'to click' means 'to go or fit together with ease, to become friendly, and get along well quickly':

E.g. They **clicked** from their first meeting.

E.g. My boyfriend and I **clicked** right away. We talked to each other every day and had a lot in common.

But that's not all! When we say something **has clicked**, it means we 'suddenly understand or remember' something. Think about when you suddenly understand something during English class!

E.g. I didn't understand that phrasal verb, but today it just **clicked** when I was talking to my friend about it.

E.g. When she started talking to me, it suddenly **clicked** where I had met her before.

Pointless



This cartoon plays on the two meanings of the word 'pointless' (adjective). When something is pointless it has no use, sense, or purpose. It is a waste of time – like trying to write when your pencil has no **point** (noun).
E.g. It's **pointless** trying to memorise all phrasal verbs by heart, because you won't understand them. Try to use each one with an example.

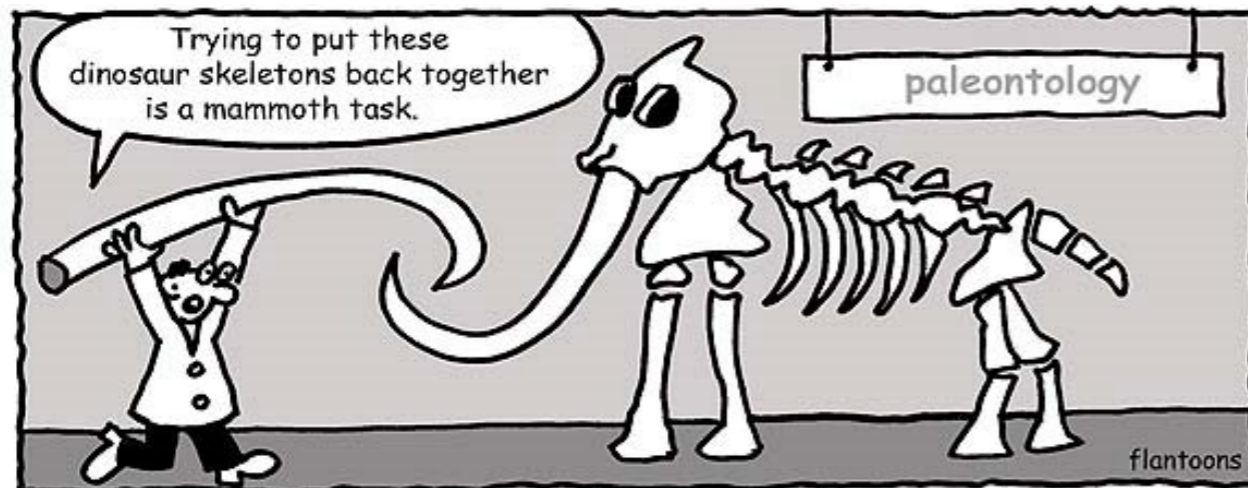
Also, when an object does not have a point (no 'sharp' part) it is pointless:
E.g. A **pointless** pencil is useless to me.

Remember

point - the sharp end of something.

-less - suffix meaning 'without'. (E.g. useless, hopeless, and careless)

Mammoth



What's going on in this cartoon? A **mammoth** (noun) is a type of extinct animal that was very big and looked like a hairy brown elephant.

As an adjective **mammoth** is used to describe something that's **very large** and usually difficult.

E.g. Cleaning up after the party was a **mammoth** task.

Note:

Skeleton – the complete bones of a human or animal.

Palaeontology – the study of old bones to learn about the history of life on Earth.

Funny



The joke in this cartoon is connected to the double meaning of the word 'funny'. When something is **funny** (adjective) it **makes us laugh**.

E.g. That film was really **funny**! I couldn't stop laughing.

E.g. He is the **funniest** person in class. He's always telling jokes!

'**Funny**' (adjective) is also used to describe 'something that is strange or unusual'.

E.g. This milk tastes **funny**. Are you sure it hasn't expired?

E.g. My car has been making a **funny** noise recently.

So in the cartoon above, the word 'funny' is talking about the clowns who make people laugh **and** the idea that they would taste strange or bad.

Spread



To spread means 'to move a soft substance across a surface' so it covers it:

E.g. **Spread** butter on the bread.

E.g. He **spread** a thin layer of glue on the paper.

'**To spread**' is also used to mean that information is communicated from one person to another.

E.g. The rumour **spread** quickly.

E.g. News of her promotion **spread** rapidly through the company.

Handy

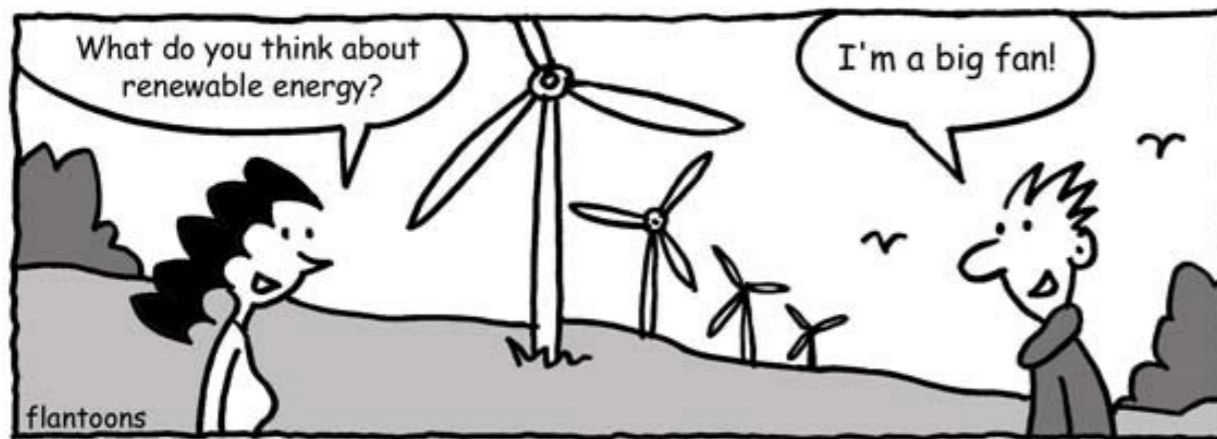


When something is useful, convenient or helpful we can say it is **handy**.
E.g. An iPad is a **handy** thing to have when you travel. (An iPad is useful to have when you travel)
E.g. She's very **handy** with a paintbrush. (She's good at painting)

Handy is also used in the idiom **come in handy** meaning **that something may be useful later**
E.g. Don't throw that map away, it might **come in handy**.

Note: **Sign language** is a system of communication using hand signs, as used with deaf people (people who cannot hear).

Fan



The big objects you can see in the picture are called **wind turbines**. They look like large fans (the machines we use to keep us cool) and they're used to produce 'clean' energy.

The noun **fan** is also used to describe a person who likes and admires someone or something:
E.g. I'm a big music **fan**.
E.g. The team gave their **fans** an incredible performance.

Note: **Renewable energy** is energy that comes from resources which never run out such as sunlight, wind and water.

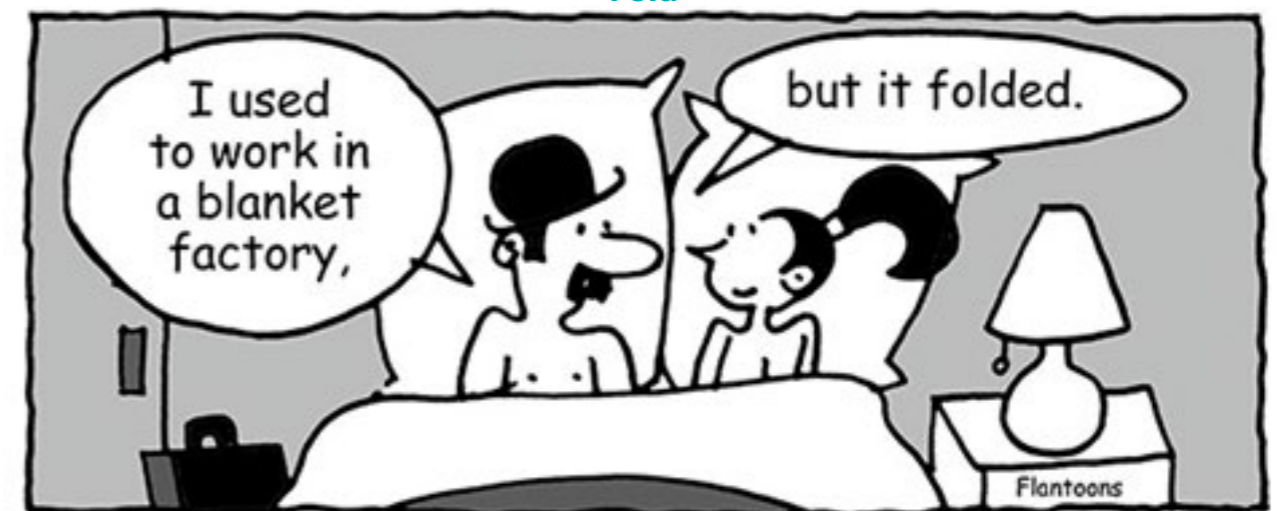
Spot



The Dalmatian dog in the cartoon has black spots on its body. **Spots** are small round marks. When something has spots on it, we say it is **spotted** (adjective): It's a **spotted** dog.
E.g. The man painting the wall has **spots** of paint on his clothes.
E.g. She bought a **spotted** dress to wear to the party.

We're not done yet! **Spot** is also used as a **verb** meaning 'to notice, find or detect something'. E.g. Read this report and see if you can **spot** any mistakes.
E.g. I **spotted** my friend in the crowd.

Fold



A blanket is a large piece of material (usually woollen) which is used to cover a bed and/or to keep a person warm. When you **fold** a blanket, paper, or cloth you bend it so that one part of it lies flat on top of another part. E.g. Origami is the traditional Japanese art of paper **folding** to make designs without cutting the paper. E.g. **Fold** the clothes and put them away please.

When a business **folds**, it goes bankrupt; it fails and is unable to continue.
E.g. Many small businesses **fold** within the first year.
E.g. After losing so much money, the company **folded** and many people lost their jobs.

Leaves and Trunks



"A BOTANIST CLAIMED TO HAVE DISCOVERED A NOMADIC TREE IN THE AFRICAN JUNGLE..... APPARENTLY IT JUST PACKS UP ITS TRUNK AND LEAVES."

The words **trunk** and **leaves** are both homonyms. Let's start by taking a look at the two meanings of the word trunk.

Trunk (noun): a large box or chest used for storing things, sometimes used for travel.
E.g. The **trunk** is heavy because it's full of clothes.

Trunk (noun): the main stem of a tree; generally brown in colour, this is the part of the tree we use for wood.
E.g. When we were young, we carved our names into the **trunk** of a huge tree.

The same goes for the word **leaves**.

Leaves (verb): Used as a verb ('to leave') in the third person (he/she/it), '**leaves**' means to go out of or away from.

E.g. If you've completed the exam, you may take your bag and **leave** the classroom.

E.g. Rachel **leaves** work at 5:30 PM every day.

Leaves (noun): The plural form of the word '**leaf**'. A leaf is the green part of a tree, flower, or plant.

E.g. During autumn the **leaves** change colour and fall from the trees.

² To carve: to cut a hard material in order to produce an object or inscription.

HOMOPHONES

What is a homophone?

A homophone is a word which sounds the same as another word, but has a different meaning.

Ahead/a head



The two hats in the cartoon seem to be having a conversation. How strange!

The homophone here can be found in the words **a head**. 'Head' is, of course, the upper part of the human body – the part of your body where the brain, eyes, nose, mouth, ears, and hair are found. But 'a head' sounds exactly like the word **ahead**, an adverb which means '**further forward**' or '**towards the front of** someone or something.

Let's look at some examples to make sure we've understood the difference:

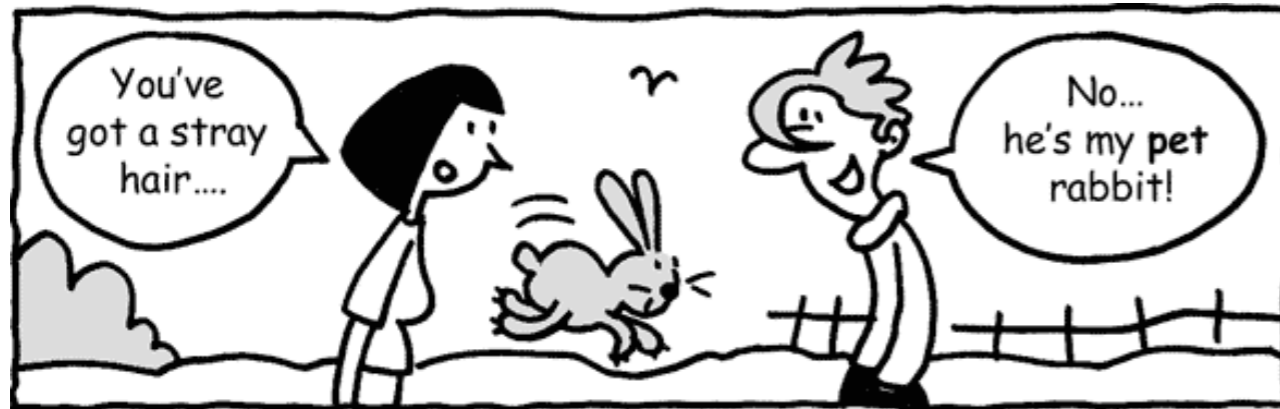
E.g. Go on **ahead**. (Move on and continue without me.)

E.g. She likes to plan **ahead**. (She likes to know what she's going to do before the time comes.)

E.g. Move the appointment **ahead** from Tuesday to Monday. (The appointment was on Tuesday, but now it's been moved to an earlier date.)

E.g. My team was **ahead** by two goals. (We were winning by 2 goals.)

Hair/hare



Has he got a stray hair or a stray hare? What's the difference? **Hair** grows on your head while a **hare** (pronounced the same way as hair) is an animal very much **like a rabbit**. The word 'stray' means '**something out of place**'. The boy's hair is messy and therefore has stray strands of hair. The rabbit, however, is a pet and therefore not a stray animal and certainly not a **stray hare**!

Which/witch



When do we use 'witch' and 'which'? What's the difference? A **witch** is a **woman who practises magic or has magical powers** – just like the character Hermione in Harry Potter. The male equivalent of the word 'witch' is 'wizard' (you can see two wizards to the left of the picture). The word 'which' can be used as a pronoun or as a determiner:

Pronoun: As a pronoun, we use 'which' when referring to **something previously mentioned** when introducing a clause containing more information.
E.g. **Which** witch were you talking about?

Determiner: As a determiner, we use 'which' when asking for more information specifying one or more people or things from a set.
E.g. The party **which** started at 10 PM. (What party am I talking about? The party which started at 10 PM).

Stationery/stationary



Although they have different meanings, **stationary** and **stationery** are often confused because of their very similar spellings. Time to take a quick look at these two words:

Stationery (noun): Things needed for writing, such as paper, pens, highlighters, pencils and envelopes.
E.g. I need to buy some **stationery** before school starts.

Stationery store (noun): The shop that sells writing-paper, pens, pencils and envelopes.
E.g. We opened a **stationery store** last year and things have been going well so far.

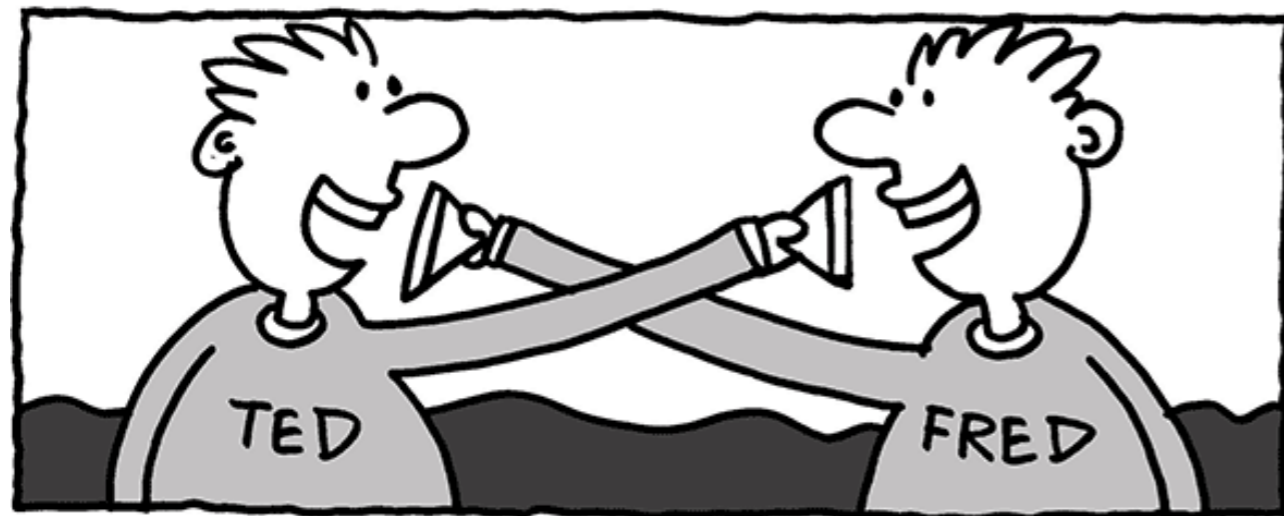
Stationary (adjective): not moving, standing still.
E.g. The car remained **stationary** with the engine turned on.

Note: When something is standing still, it's stationary. Paper you write a letter on is stationery. Let the 'E' in 'stationery' remind you of 'envelope.'
The man walked into the **stationery** shop. (The shop sells writing materials.)
The man walked into the **stationary** shop. (The shop does not move.)

TONGUE TWISTERS

What is a tongue twister?

A tongue twister is a sequence of words or sounds that are typically difficult to pronounce quickly and correctly. One example of a tongue-twisters is 'Peter Piper picked peck of pickled peppers.'



FRED FED TED BREAD, AND TED FED FRED BREAD.

This is an example of a **Tongue-Twister** - even native English speakers can find them difficult. They are a fun way to practise your pronunciation. Say tongue-twisters out loud, but instead of concentrating on the speed, say them **slowly** and **correctly**. Here are a few more popular examples:

She sells sea-shells on the sea-shore.

The shells she sells are sea-shells, I'm sure.

For if she sells sea-shells on the sea-shore

Then I'm sure she sells sea-shore shells.

Betty Botter bought a bit of butter.

The butter Betty Botter bought was a bit bitter

And made her batter bitter.

But a bit of better butter makes better batter.

So Betty Botter bought a bit of better butter

Making Betty Botter's bitter batter better

COLLOCATIONS

What is a collocation?

You might have come across this word during an English class; a collocation is the combination of two or more words which just sound 'right' when used by native speakers. If you ask an English-speaker **why** they use those words together, there's a good chance that they won't know the answer! Let's look at some examples to understand what a collocation is.

Tired of



What's wrong with this sleepy sheep? Well, insomnia is a common sleep problem. People who have insomnia have trouble falling asleep at night. As a result, they get too little sleep or have poor-quality sleep. When you are **tired of** something, you are bored because something has been happening repeatedly for too long. E.g. *I'm so **tired of** doing the same thing every day. I need a change of pace.*

Note: When a health problem has been recognised and named, usually by a doctor, it has been diagnosed. E.g. *The doctor **diagnosed** her with a bad case of chicken pox.*

There are hundreds, maybe even thousands, of collocations in the English language. Here are some of the most common used with examples.

HAVE	DO	MAKE	TAKE
Have a drink	Do (my) homework	Make money	Take a taxi
Have a bath	Do (my) hair	Make progress	Take a look
Have a problem	Do business	Make a mistake	Take notes
Have a shower/bath	Do (someone) a favour	Make an effort	Take a chance
Have fun	Do some shopping	Make a difference	Take a break

CATCH	REAK	GET	GO
Catch a cold	Break a promise	Get lost	Go home
Catch the bus	Break (someone's) heart	Get a job	Go abroad/ on holiday
Catch fire	Break a rule/the law	Get married/divorced	Go crazy
Catch the ball	Break the news	Get upset/angry	Go shopping
Catch (my) eye	Break the habit	Get scared	Go sailing/swimming/hiking/ sightseeing

Test your knowledge

Now that you've found out all about these phrasal verbs, it's time to test your knowledge. Use these exercises to make sure that you've understood the meaning behind each phrasal verb, then check your answers on the last page.

Exercise 1: Find and correct the mistakes in 5 of the 6 sentences below.

1. I'm exhausted! Go on a head without me – I'll meet you all later.

2. Witch party do you want to go to tonight? I'm in the mood for some dancing.

3. Gabrielle has beautiful long, wavy hair.

4. Before you leaves, have a hot cup of coffee.

5. When I'm older, I'd love to open my own bookshop and stationary.

6. Excuse me waiter, but there's a hare in my pasta.

Exercise 2: Replace the words in bold with ONE WORD possessing the same meaning.

1. Look at that piece of meat! It's so **contains very little fat**.

2. When we were kids, we used to think that the school was haunted by **ghosts**.

3. Try not to make any **careless or unwise** decisions. Think about it for a few days.

4. My mother asked me to help her **bend something to that one part lies on the other part** the laundry before lunch.

5. Jason's company **failed/closed** because of very bad management.

6. Rhinoceroses are frequently hunted by poachers because of their **hard/pointed/curved part that grows from the head of some animals**.

7. A terrible **odour** is coming from the fridge.

8. We **got along well very quickly** from the first day that we met.

9. Arguing with Asli is **has no use/makes no sense** – she's very stubborn and won't change her mind.

10. Re-organizing the entire library is going to be a **very difficult** task.

11. I heard a really **makes me laugh** joke this morning.

12. News of the couple's divorce **was communicated from one person to another** very quickly.

13. Paul is a very big **person who likes and admires someone or something** of the band ACDC.

14. Look at this photo and see if you can **find** yourself in it.

15. I need to pack one more **large box/chest you can store things** in full of clothes before I move in to my new apartment.

Vocab worksheet – Answer Key

Ex.1

1. A head ---> ahead
2. Witch ---> which
3. Correct
4. Leaves ---> leave
5. Stationary ---> Stationery
6. Hare ---> hair

Ex. 2

1. Lean
2. Spirits
3. Rash
4. Fold
5. Folded
6. Horns
7. Smell
8. Clicked
9. Pointless
10. Mammoth
11. Funny
12. Spread
13. Fan
14. Spot
15. Trunk



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