

MULTI WORD VERBS

You and your learner have probably found, to your frustration, that some verbs in English appear to be several words long. These are mostly very common, informal (idiomatic) verbs which are often used in conversation.

*You need to **pull up** your socks at once, Humphrey. I'm not going to put up with this standard of housekeeping any longer!*

*Cornelia is not an easy person to **get on with**, I find.*

These verbs are the subject of many fascinating grammar books, under various headings – phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, multi-word verbs.... They're not the sort of thing you want to discuss in detail with your learner (or at all, in fact) but are worth your knowing about because of their behaviour.

Multi-word verbs fall into three main groups. Each group involves slightly different word order in sentences, which bothers a native speaker not at all, but is often a mystery to learners.

1. The first group is of two-word verbs where the two words don't separate.

*It's my turn to **pay for** the herb teas this time.
No, no, Euphemia, you **paid for** them last Tuesday. Martha will **pay for** them today.*

2. The second group is of two-word verbs which sometimes separate and sometimes don't. (It has to do with whether the direct object is a noun phrase or a pronoun. You may not want to know this).

*You **put on** your long johns this morning I hope, Theodore.
Of course Bertha my dear. I **put them on** before I brought your tea.*

3. The third group is of verbs which have more than two words. Occasionally one word separates off; usually the words all stick together.

*I must **get on with** the dinner. Mrs Higginbottom will be home shortly.*

*That grammar article was fascinating, Dolores. I **look forward to** the next one.*

*Horace was becoming interested in the grammar enthusiasts' club, but his wife **talked him out of** it. So unfortunate!*

How about inviting them both to the next meeting as special guests, Rupert?

*Great idea Percy! I'll **take you up on** that.*

Catch up with you next time!

Dorothy