

# 10 Useful Phrasal Verbs for IELTS Speaking

Phrasal verbs are extremely common in natural spoken English and since sounding natural is the key to success in IELTS Speaking, you should be using some of them.

Here are 10 phrasal verbs that will make your English sound more natural, and that will help you get a higher score in IELTS Speaking.

## List of Phrasal Verbs

1. Crop up
2. Nail down
3. Iron out
4. Pack in
5. Ache for
6. Drag on
7. Do away with
8. Set back
9. Slip up
10. Flick through

# Phrasal Verb #1 CROP UP

**To crop up** - appear unexpectedly / suddenly (= to pop up)

**We can use this with the following:**

- Problems
- Shops
- Opportunities
- Restaurants

**Examples:**

I have to work late today, something **cropped up** (at work)

In my hometown Chinese restaurants **are cropping up** everywhere  
(*Present Continuous*)

In my hometown Chinese restaurants **have been cropping up**  
everywhere  
(*Present Perfect Continuous*)

## Phrasal Verb #2 NAIL DOWN

**To nail down** - identify clearly

**We can use this with the following:**

- An answer
- A date
- A time
- A reason

**Examples:**

**Why do you think....?**

Well it's hard to **nail down** the reason, but maybe it's because....

## Phrasal Verb #3 IRON OUT

**To iron out** = get rid of = to remove

**We can use this with the following:**

- Problems
- Difficulties
- Misunderstandings

**Examples:**

*In IELTS Speaking Part 3*

**How can we solve this problem?**

The best way to **iron out** this problem is to....

## Phrasal Verb #4 PACK IN

**To pack in** = to stop doing something

**We can use this with the following:**

- Jobs
- Courses
- Hobbies

**Examples:**

I went to the gym for 3 months but then I **packed it in**. I didn't have enough time to go.

I want **to pack in my job**. It's not very rewarding and badly paid.

I took up painting, but then **packed it in**, because I didn't enjoy it.

## Phrasal Verb #5 ACHE FOR

**Ache for** - desire strongly, long for

**We can use this with the following:**

- A holiday
- Home
- A beer
- A night out with friends

**Examples:**

I'm **aching for** a holiday  
*Present continuous*

I've **been aching for** a holiday  
*Present perfect continuous*

## Phrasal Verb #6 DRAG ON

**To drag on** - last longer than necessary

The meaning might be clearer if we look at the noun:

**A drag (n)** which means 'boring'

### Examples:

The pandemic **has dragged on** for such a long time  
*Present Perfect*

The pandemic **has been dragging on** for such a long time  
*Present Perfect Continuous*

*This can be useful in IELTS Speaking Part 2, especially when describing situations that are **boring**.*

The conversation **dragged on for so long**

The party **dragged on for too long**

The lesson **dragged on for ages**

The meeting **dragged on for ever**

## Phrasal Verb #7 DO AWAY WITH

**Do away with something** = to remove, stop, abolish

**We can use this with the following:**

- laws
- rules
- taxes
- restrictions
- obligation

*It can be useful IELTS Speaking Part 3 , for example if the examiner asks the following;*

**What do you think about....?**

I wish we **could do away with masks** (COVID)

The government should **do away with this law** (NEW LAW)

We should **do away with exams** (EDUCATION SYSTEM)



## IELTS Speaking TIP

*Spoken English we often repeat ideas, phrases, in a slightly different way.*

*So, you can do the same here.*

*You can use a phrasal verb in one phrase, and then use the meaning in the second phrase.*

*See this in the example below;*

I think we should **do away with** exams, the government should **abolish** them.

## Phrasal Verb #8 SET ME BACK

**It set me back** = it cost a lot of money

*We usually use this phrasal verb when we want to say something was expensive, or too expensive. So it has a slightly negative connotation.*

### **Examples:**

It set me back 5 dollars

It set me back a lot money

It set me back a fortune

It set me back a fair penny

## Phrasal Verb #9 SLIP UP

### To slip up - make a mistake

*The meaning is clearer if we look at the original verb: to slip which means 'to fall' because the ground is smooth, icy or has a banana peel on it!*

### We can use this with the following:

- Work
- Relationships
- Government

### Examples:

The government **has slipped up** with their new policy on travel restrictions

I **slipped up** at work yesterday, I made a huge mistake, I lost my manager's presentation

I **slipped up** yesterday, I forgot my wife's birthday

## Phrasal Verb #10 FLICK THROUGH

**To flick through** = to look through quickly

**We can use this with the following:**

- A book
- A magazine
- A newspaper
- A photo album

*Given that we now also read many things in a digital format, the more modern version of this phrasal verb is*

**To swipe through** = to look through quickly

*This can be useful in IELTS Speaking Part 2, when we have to describe*

- *an article*
- *a piece of news*
- *a photo*

**Examples:**

**I was flicking through** the newspaper the other day and saw an article about healthy eating...

**I was swiping through** the newspaper the other day and saw an article about healthy eating...

**Thanks for reading  
and studying  
with me!**

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