Teaching Phrasal Verbs: Classification & Activity Guide

A practical guide to classifying phrasal verbs and teaching them as lexical chunks in meaningful groups.

Classification by grammar

- Intransitive: no object (The plane took off).
- Transitive separable: object can split the verb (turn it off / turn off the light).
- Transitive inseparable: object stays after the particle (look after the children).

Teaching approaches

- Group by topic (daily routine, travel, phone) rather than by particle.
- Teach as whole lexical chunks, not verb + preposition rules.
- Highlight literal vs idiomatic meaning explicitly.

Activity ideas

- Matching phrasal verbs to single-word synonyms.
- Personalised gap-fill sentences.
- Short role-plays that recycle a set of target items.

Recycling for retention

- Return to idiomatic items repeatedly over several lessons.
- Use spaced review and personalised example sentences.
- Encourage learners to keep a topic-based phrasal verb log.