

'NEW' PHRASAL VERBS

How new words develop

In English, very few 'new' words are *completely* new. The vast majority include at least one component that we are already familiar with. A very common way of giving a name to a new concept is simply to combine two existing words into a new phrase. Some recent examples are:

text message
speed dating
self-build

As well as new combinations of words, parts of existing words are sometimes merged together to form new words. For example:

digibox (*digital* + *box*)
movieoke (*movie* + *karaoke*)

Very often, too, we simply find new ways of using words that already exist. For example, because of the widespread use of computers, nouns and verbs such as the ones below have acquired completely new senses – some of which are now used more frequently than the original meanings:

window, mouse, virus, bug, web, surf

New phrasal verbs

New verbs and adjectives are much less frequent than new nouns. So all these trends in the development of new words suggest that completely new phrasal verbs are likely to be quite rare in English, and that any 'new' phrasal verbs that we do find will in most cases be formed *either* from new combinations of existing verbs and particles, *or* through existing phrasal verbs acquiring new meanings.

For instance, until recently, the phrasal verb **bump** someone **off** had only one meaning: an informal way of saying 'to murder someone'. But we now see this verb being used in a new way, in examples like these:

An error message appeared and I was bumped off the Net.

*There's a problem with a virus and you get **bumped off** after a few minutes of being online.*

This use of **bump off** refers to the situation where the connection between a person's computer and the Internet is unexpectedly broken. A new sense of the phrasal verb has been born, so the dictionary entry now shows two meanings:

bump 'off' *informal*

1 [often passive] to murder someone = DO IN, KILL

be bumped off *He was scared of being bumped off.*

bump off sb *also bump sb off* *He's the guy who bumped off the professor. ♦ She paid someone to bump him off.*

2 [usually passive] if you are bumped off a computer system, you can no longer use the Internet because the connection with your computer is suddenly broken

be/get bumped off *If you don't have the right software installed, you may be bumped off the system. ♦ I got bumped off my connection while I was trying to reserve a flight.*

Creative uses of phrasal verbs

Many new combinations of verbs and particles arise from a creative use of English, when a speaker wants to find a verb that will express their thoughts at a particular moment.

A common way of doing this is by manipulating one of the components of the phrasal verb – either the *verb* or the *particle*.

Creative use of the verb component

In 2003, the celebrity cook Delia Smith was quoted as saying that she was '*all reciped out ...*'

when she announced her intention to retire from TV cookery programmes. You will not find an entry in any dictionary for the phrase **be reciped out**: writers and speakers often use