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Peer reviewed

Really Learn 100 Phrasal Verbs edited by Dilys Parkinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 110 pp.

Really Learn 100 More Phrasal Verbs edited by Dilys Parkinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 110 pp.

Reviewed by Myrna Goldstein

Are You in Your English File?® Second Language Learning Research Center,
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Oxford University Press (OUP) has produced the second edition of the self-study *Really Learn 100 Phrasal Verbs*. It is described on the copyright page as a dictionary and has an additional new volume, *Really Learn 100 More Phrasal Verbs*. Both volumes are suitable for lower intermediate to intermediate learners. They both contain 110 pages and have been edited by the same author. A quick Internet check shows this author to have written other OUP dictionaries, mostly about phrasal verbs and business English in various permutations and combinations. One may therefore assume that the author has specialized in these two areas and has been helping students over the phrasal verb hurdle since at least 2001, when the first OUP book clearly labeled a phrasal verbs dictionary was published. By not having access to this information in these texts, teachers and other personnel responsible for ordering textbooks are unfortunately not aware of how authoritative these books may be. Indeed, while browsing through the OUP catalog without peeking inside the covers, these books could easily be written off as just two more short phrasal verb vocabulary texts.

The emphasis on the covers is learning 100 phrasal verbs per book; therefore, the appeal is directly to students, since they are most interested in jumping over the phrasal verb barrier. Luckily for the student, these books are authoritative, handy, useful study guides for people plagued by what can often be an overwhelming lexical learning challenge. Unfortunately, until this point there has been no magic methodology for learning phrasal verbs other than by organizing them and attempting to categorize them, hoping to stuff them into one's long-term memory. For one, meaning often is not related at all to the preposition(s) and particle(s) attached to the base verb. Secondly, there are phrasal verbs with multiple meanings. In addition, phrasal verbs with multiple particles can make learning especially difficult.

Indeed, these books seem expressly made with the struggling student in mind. First, they move beyond the standard phrasal verb dictionary by not overwhelming the student. The pages are a handy 6-in. x 9-in. format and the lexical entries have been limited to 100 units per book, each unit one page long covering one phrasal verb. The verbs have been chosen on the basis of high frequency and use. Each unit

is divided methodically and visually using boldface type and simple cartoons into: “Study” (3-6 sentence examples), “Check” (core meaning and grammar, especially word order), “Practise” (use through exercises), and “Build your vocabulary” (with related synonyms/antonyms, idiomatic expressions and meanings). It is unclear why a revision, review, and self-test section with answer keys has been inserted in the center of the book instead of at the end. It is also unclear why OUP left out a compact list of the 100 units from the Table of Contents. This format forces students to jump immediately to the exercise key to see which verbs are in the book. And since the exercise key is immediately at hand, one can assume that many students would simply read it before attempting to complete the exercises themselves.

That said, the revision consists of a 10- to 12-page review section with an answer key inserted after the first fifty verbs, easily delineated by a gray stripe bleeding along the right margin. It is organized by preposition/particle followed by high frequency phrasal verb bases, such as ‘get’, ‘put’, and other verbs grouped into themes. Students are given blank columns with core meaning headers, such as increasing/improving, starting, reducing, etc. In the newer book, along with particles and two base verbs (go and take), the review section features word map exercises, content-based multiple choice, cloze, error correction and matching exercises (computers, business, informal language, work and study, and human behavior (relationships and facing problems).

Troublesome verbs such as ‘get’ and ‘put’ are given the space they rightfully deserve. ‘Get’ has top billing in seven units in the first book and six units in the second book. ‘Put’ is treated in eight units in the first book and five units in the second book. ‘Go’ occupies six units in each of the books. The organization of the books also eases the teacher’s task as the units provide easy, quick reference for discussion and visual presentation of the material.

Despite their minimal drawbacks, both books would make a tough task easier on both a practical and affective level for students, and would allow teachers to save valuable classroom time. These are the books’ greatest advantages.