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The "Separability" Trap

Please **remember** this one **golden rule** for your writing: If you use "**Iron out**," it is **separable**.

- **Noun:** You can say "Iron out the **problems**" OR "Iron the **problems** out." (Both are 100% correct).
- **Pronoun:** If you use "them," it **must** go in the middle: "I ironed **them** out." (You cannot say "I ironed out them").

Let's test your ability to choose the right phrasal verb based on **context**, **tense**, and **grammar** (**separability**).

Grab a coffee, take your time, and let's see how many of these 15 you can knock out of the park. 😊



Phrasal Verb Proficiency Exam



Section 1: Multiple Choice (The Nuance Test)

Choose the most natural fit for a B2+ speaker.

1. We need to _____ the contract before the meeting to ensure there are no errors.
 - A) Look up
 - B) Go over
 - C) Put out
2. I'm really _____ moving to a new country, but I haven't committed yet.
 - A) Toying with
 - B) Catching on
 - C) Siding with
3. After the scandal, the CEO was forced to _____.
 - A) Step down
 - B) Set off
 - C) Take over

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Section 2: Fill in the Particle

*The verb is provided; you provide the **missing preposition/adverb**.*

4. It took me months to get **over** the flu, but I finally feel back to normal. (**Example**)
5. Can you fill _____ for me at the reception desk while I grab lunch?
6. I ran _____ an old classmate at the airport yesterday.
7. Don't let the bad news get you _____; things will improve!
8. We've narrowed the candidates _____ to just three people.

Section 3: The "Rewrite" Challenge

Rewrite the sentence using the phrasal verb in brackets. Watch your word order!

9. We had to cancel the outdoor concert because of the rain. (**Call off**)

○ Answer: _____

10. I respect and admire my older brother. (**Look up to**)

○ Answer: _____

11. You shouldn't ignore the mistakes in the report. (**Gloss over**)

○ Answer: _____

12. I finally understood the joke after a few seconds. (**Cotton on**)

○ Answer: _____

Section 4: Spot the Error

*One word is **wrong** or **misplaced**. Fix it.*

13. I'm looking forward to meet you next week.

14. The plane touched up at exactly 6:00 PM.

15. He is always putting off it until the last minute.

Answer Key & "Teacher's Notes" on:

✓ Activity 1: Advanced Practice Challenge

1. **Put up with:** Remember, this is a three-word phrasal verb. It is inseparable.
2. **Put off:** *Postpone* is formal; *put off* is much more natural in conversation.
3. **Takes after:** Note the "s" for third-person singular!
4. **Figure out / Work out:** Both are acceptable here.
5. **Owned up:** Past tense is required.
6. **Go over / Look over:** *Go over* implies a more thorough check than *look over*.
7. **Ran into:** A very common social phrasal verb.
8. **Came up with:** Always followed by the object (the plan).

✓ Activity 2: Top 10 Advanced Challenge

1. **D:** (Mull over = Ponder)
2. **A:** (Abide by = Comply)
3. **B:** (Gloss over = Downplay)
4. **C:** (Bank on = Count on)
5. **E:** (Iron out = Smooth over)
6. **G:** (Cotton on = Realise)
7. **F:** (Own up = Admit)
8. **H:** (Pan out = Succeed)
9. **J:** (Size up = Appraise)
10. **I:** (Write off = Give up on)

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✓ Proficiency Exam Solutions:

Section 1:

1. **B (Go over):** Means to review thoroughly.
2. **A (Toying with):** Means considering an idea casually.
3. **A (Step down):** The professional way to say "resign."