

**CURSO DE INGLÊS MAIRO VERGARA**  
**MONOLINGUAL PHASE**

**Lesson 10 | Find Out, Figure Out, and Pull Off**

Hi, I'm Sonja Burger. I'm speaking to you from Paarl, a beautiful historic town close to Cape town in South Africa. Today, we will look at three different phrasal verbs. The first one is to 'find out', the second to 'figure out' and the third one to 'pull off'.

Now, 'find out' has two different meanings. The first one is to get information, either by studying or researching a topic or a question or to find information by chance. The second meaning is to be caught doing something wrong – to be caught in an offence. Let's start with the first meaning 'to get information'. The first sample sentence:

***For tomorrow's lesson, find out who the sculptor of the famous art Deco sculpture 'Christ the Redeemer' is, the one in Rio.***

So this teacher wants her students to do research to find out information in preparation for a lesson. The second sample sentence:

***You all insisting on a family ski trip to Switzerland but has anyone bothered to find out how much this trip will cost?***

Asks the father. So his problem is that they haven't found out, they haven't done the research to get the information to discover the information about the cost. So he's very unhappy about that.

The third meaning is to get information by chance.

***I found out by chance who my biological mother was when I walked into the dentist room one day and there I saw a replica of myself sitting at the switchboard. A mirror image.***

So this person was adopted when she was young. But she didn't seek out to find her mother, she didn't try to find out her mother's identity; it happened by chance.

It's important to note that the phrasal verb 'find out' is often used with conjunctions. Four specific conjunctions: whether, if, about and that. 'Find out whether', 'find out if', 'find out about' and fourthly, they 'found out that'. So its whether, if, about and that. When you use the phrasal verb 'find out' make sure that you pay attention to the correct use of the conjunction.

And now we look at the second meaning: to be caught in an offence, to be found out doing something wrong. And here I'd like to use an example from the world of finance:

***Several very wealthy people, who have tried to hide their money illegally in offshore companies, were found out when damning papers were leaked online.***

So in this case, these very wealthy people tried to hide their money in order to evade tax but they were found out. And here it's important to notice that the use, or to notice that the passive voice is normally used in this sense. The people were found out; that is passive voice construction.

Now for our second phrasal verb 'to figure out.' We will look at two meanings. The first meaning of 'to figure out' is to think about a problem or a situation until you have found the solution or an answer or until you

understand what has happened. The second meaning of ‘to figure out’ is to understand why a person behaves in a certain way.

Now to illustrate the first meaning we’re going to look at an example from the world of science.

***Once Alexander Fleming had figured out the mould growing in one of his petri dishes can kill bacteria, he was on his way to developing the world’s first antibiotic.***

Now in 1928, Alexander Fleming went on holiday – summer holiday. And when he returned on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September he started sorting through his petri dishes and he noticed that one of the petri dishes containing a staphylococcus colony actually had a bit of mould growing in it and around that mould. The solution was clear; the staphylococcus had died. A staphylococcus is a nasty bacterium. It can cause anything from a sore throat to pneumonia. So Alexander Fleming figured out that this thing growing in the petri dish could kill harmful bacteria and his ability to figure that out has changed the world and has saved millions of lives.

The second sample sentence that illustrates this meaning is:

***Management specialists have figured out that the best way to build strong work teams is to encourage good interpersonal relationships.***

Notice the use of the conjunction ‘that’ – ‘figure out that’ and use it correctly in the future.

Meaning two, to understand why someone behaves in a specific way.

Example sentence:

***The young man says “Once I have figured out what makes that girl tick, I’ll take her out on a date.”***

Now notice the construction here. You figure someone out. And here you would either use a noun, a pronoun or a proper noun. I figure her out. I figure him out. I figure the boy or the girl out. I figure Rebecca or Renaldo out. And in this case the figuring out is not about figuring out facts of a subject but more about emotional intelligence.

The third phrasal verb is ‘pull off’. Two meanings: to succeed in doing something difficult and number two: to drive a car off the road and to come to a standstill. Let’s look at the first meaning, to succeed in doing something difficult. Example sentence:

***No one thought the ultra-marathon runner would finish the race before the cut off time because he had hurt his knee in a bad fall but he managed to pull it off.***

So this ultra-marathon runner managed to complete the race successfully despite his injury. You will notice that the phrasal verb ‘pull off’ is often used with qualities such as courage or daring or shrewd intelligence. In this case, the runner succeeded because he had grit and because he could persist.

And the second meaning is to pull a car off the road. Now in this case it’s not to drive off the road as in drive off a road and into a cliff or ditch. It’s a gentle getting off the road for a specific reason. Example sentence:

***John, pull off the road immediately; I think we have a flat tire. Can you hear that thumping sound?***

Yeah, we all know the sickening sound of a flat tire and that would be a good reason to pull off. To get off the road. Another reason would be to admire the view.

And that's all for today's lesson. So now that you have found out more about these phrasal verbs, you'll be able to figure out the meaning of sentences in which they are used and you'll be able to pull off more complex conversations.