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ADVANCED PHRASAL VERBS COURSE

Lesson 41 | Sentences

FRONT

The cattle break through the fence.

BACK

break through = to use physical force in order to get through a barrier

This is the literal meaning of "break through". A barrier is an obstacle that prevents movement from one place to another. If you break through, you use physical force to get through the barrier. The cattle use physical force to break through the fence.

FRONT

The mob broke through the police line on campus and started hitting students who did not support their cause.

BACK

break through = to use physical force in order to get through a barrier

In this case the riot police formed a barrier to protect other students but the mob used physical force to get through the police line.

FRONT

The goal in rugby is to break through the defense of the opposition.

BACK

break through = to use physical force in order to get through a barrier

Rugby players always try to force their way through their opponents' defence. Rugby players use their bodies and tactical play to prevent the opposing teams from reaching the try line. Their bodies become the barrier through which the opposing team tries to break.

FRONT

The beautiful granite domes were formed 500 million years ago when molten rock beneath the earth's surface intruded into cracks and spaces above it. In some cases the molten rock broke through the rocks above.

BACK

break through = to use physical force in order to get through a barrier

You can imagine the immense geological forces involved in breaking through rock. Notice that the past tense of "break" is "broke" and the past participle form is "broken". The molten rock broke through. It had broken through.

FRONT

The army broke through enemy defenses.

BACK

break through = to use physical force in order to get through a barrier

An army uses weapons to break through the defenses of another army. When you “break through” enemy lines you force your way into the territory of your enemy. The army that loses is the one that cannot stop its enemy from taking over its territory.

FRONT

The sun breaks through the clouds.

BACK

break through = to use physical force in order to get through a barrier

In this sentence the clouds form a barrier through which the sun’s rays have to penetrate. Clouds block direct solar radiation. When the direct solar radiation is not blocked, we call that state “sunshine”! You could also argue that the meaning of “break through” in the sample sentence is “to appear” - the sun appeared.

FRONT

For years women struggled to break through the glass ceiling.

BACK

break through = to find your way through a problem/ a situation that is stopping you from making progress

A glass ceiling is the metaphorical invisible barrier preventing women from reaching positions of power. It is made of “glass” because women can see the elite positions of influence but cannot reach them because of the way in which society is structured.

In 2014 Famous African American Hollywood producer Shonda Rhimes, responsible for shows such as Grey’s Anatomy, paid tribute to the many women before her who repeatedly hit the metaphorical glass ceiling, got bruised, got cut and got shards of glass in their hair so that women like herself could feel the wind whistling through against their skins. Shonda Rhimes says it took the efforts of countless women who came before her to break through that barrier so that her generation could succeed.

FRONT

His attempts to break through racism and discrimination at work were met with resistance.

BACK

break through = to find your way through a problem/ a situation that is stopping you from making progress

The figurative meaning of “break through” deals with metaphorical barriers. You don’t break through physical barriers but through metaphorical barriers such as class, race, poverty or gender discrimination.

FRONT

After taking her on several dates, Paul managed to break through Angie’s reserve.

BACK

break through = to find your way through a problem/ a situation that is stopping you from making progress

Someone who is reserved does not easily open up to other people emotionally. Reserved

people are very private. This sentence suggests that Paul's attempts to make a connection with Angie only progressed once he had spent enough time with her.

FRONT

It took months of therapy before the psychologist could finally break through the patient's apparent indifference and apathy.

BACK

break through = to find your way through a problem/ a situation that is stopping you from making progress

People who are hurt psychologically often withdraw into themselves and hide behind a mask of indifference. They seem to be indifferent - not to care, when, in fact, they hurt terribly. In this sample sentence the patient's indifference made treatment and progress difficult but eventually the therapy worked.

FRONT

The rugby players take off their shirts after the game.

BACK

take off = to remove something, e.g. clothes, shoes, etc.

Rugby can be a muddy game, especially when it rains. That is why rugby players remove the shirts they wear during the game and replace them with clean shirts.

FRONT

She took off her scarf when the sun came out because she suddenly felt hot.

BACK

take off = to remove something, e.g. clothes, shoes, etc.

In this sentence the woman removed her scarf because she felt uncomfortably hot.

FRONT

One often sees birds taking off from these granite rocks.

BACK

take off = go up into the air

The birds take flight, become airborne.

FRONT

The plane took off from Galeão International Airport in Rio.

BACK

take off = go up into the air

In other words, the plane departed/ left/ went up into the air.

FRONT

He took off without paying his rent.

BACK

take off = to leave, depart suddenly

When “take off” is used in this context the phrasal verb is associated with fleeing, with leaving hastily for some reason. In this sample sentence the man does not want to pay his rent so he leaves hastily.

FRONT

She took off on a trip to Turkey soon after her son’s death.

BACK

take off = to leave, depart suddenly

In this sentence the woman left, not because she wanted to dodge her financial responsibilities, but because she felt depressed after her son’s death and could not stand being at home alone. Therefore she left suddenly to get away.

FRONT

When the first cell phones came out in the eighties, she did not think this new technology would take off.

BACK

take off = to become popular or successful

How wrong can you be! Billions of people use cell phones today. Within thirty years the technology became so popular that it changed the world irrevocably.

FRONT

They took the painkiller off the market after it was linked to approximately 27,785 heart attacks between May 1999 and 2003.

BACK

take off = to discontinue

When a product is discontinued, it is taken off the shelf, off the market. It is no longer made or sold. The painkiller in the sample sentence can no longer be bought because it proved so harmful that it was discontinued.

FRONT

They took the pesticide off the market when they discovered that it posed a health risk for humans and animals.

BACK

take off = to discontinue

Products are often found to be harmful after they have been put on the market. DDT, for example, was hailed as a wonder pesticide until it was found that it stayed in the natural system and was toxic to a range of living organisms. It was banned world-wide for agricultural use in 2001, more than fifty years after it had been introduced.

FRONT

Can you take over in the kitchen while I bath the children?

BACK

take off = to begin to do something that someone else was doing

This mother wants the father to take over her tasks in the kitchen so she can start a new

task - bathing the children. In other words, she was busy cooking a meal and now she wants him to cook while she does something else.

FRONT

I wish someone else could take over the camera work so I can concentrate on teaching you.

BACK

take off = to begin to do something that someone else was doing

This teacher is filming herself while she is teaching an English lesson. She wishes she did not have to do the filming and the teaching simultaneously. She wishes someone else could start doing the filming for her.

FRONT

The father and the mother spent all night sitting by their ailing daughter's bed. At dawn their son took over the vigil so they could have a few hours of sleep.

BACK

take off = to begin to do something that someone else was doing

A vigil is a watch. The parents watched over their daughter and then their son took over the responsibility of watching over her. He started doing the activity that they had been doing up to that point.

FRONT

While she is on maternity leave someone else will take over her most important duties.

BACK

take off = to begin to do something that someone else was doing

Someone else will start performing the duties she had been performing up to that point.

FRONT

Number 14 took over as captain of the team.

BACK

take off = to take control of something

Number 14 became the captain - he took control of the team. It became his task to lead the team and to guide them to victory.

FRONT

The moment she took over as chairperson of the Sports Trust she introduced innovative projects.

BACK

take off = to take control of something

The new chairperson was obviously an innovative leader - someone with original and inventive ideas. The moment she took control things improved for the better.

FRONT

He took over the company by buying enough of its shares to give him the controlling stake.

BACK

take off = to take control of something

A hostile takeover is when the management of the company being taken over does not agree with the takeover. A friendly takeover is when the management of the company being taken over supports the deal. They do not mind that the other company will now control the business.

FRONT

The new dean of the engineering faculty took over last month.

BACK

take off = to take control of something

The new dean is now in charging of managing the faculty.

FRONT

In the recent elections the opposition took over three important cities.

BACK

take off = to take control of something

The opposition took control of three important cities that had previously been controlled by another party.

FRONT

Don't try to take over the meeting every time you attend. Give other people a chance to speak.

BACK

take off = to take control of something

This person wants to dominate the other people in the meeting. He does not want to listen to the opinions of others and wants to be in complete control.