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ADVANCED PHRASAL VERBS COURSE

Sentences for Anki | Lesson 01

Front:

My boss was yelling at me yesterday, and I told him to back off.

Back:

back off = to move backwards away from someone, usually because you are frightened

In this situation your boss is angry at you and he's kind of getting in your face a little bit, and you want him to move back a little bit, so you may just say: Hey, Boss. Back off! You're coming on a little too strong.

Front:

The dog started barking at me when I entered the yard, so I backed off.

Back:

back off = to move backwards away from someone, usually because you are frightened

There's a reversal motion here. You're going along, you walk into a yard and suddenly you'll hear this dog barking and you back off, you leave the yard. Because you don't want the dog to bite you.

Front:

In order to lose weight, I have decided to back off of the desserts for a little while.

Back:

back off = to decrease the intensity or amount of something:

So, I'm somebody who loves my cake and ice cream and maybe I need to just, you know, to decrease the number of calories I'm consuming. I may need to back off from the desserts.

Front:

Another boss might have told the editor to back off and not pursue the story.

Back:

back off = to draw back from doing something

A different boss might have been concerned that pursuing the story could have negative consequences; the suggestion is that he might therefore have asked the editor to turn away from the investigation and have no further involvement with this line of enquiry.

Front:

Back off and let me make my own decisions.

Back:

back off = to stop interfering

Although "back off" can mean "physically draw back", very often, as here, it has an entirely metaphorical force, meaning "stop interfering" / "leave me alone".

Front:

He refused to back off from his earlier statement.

Back:

to back off from = to withdraw from or stop defending a previous statement. This sense of "back off" is specific to US English usage; in UK English the verb would be "back down".

One person is asking another to accept that something they have said was wrong, and to admit their error, but the other person is unwilling to do this.

Front:

I'm really feisty and I never back down from a confrontation.

Back:

back down = to admit you were wrong, or to stop supporting a position

I often think of backing down in the context of a confrontation, you've got one person over here and you have another person over here and they're butting heads. Eventually, one of them is going to have to back down if the confrontation is going to be resolved.

Front:

When I challenged my neighbor on his plans to build a fence between our houses he backed down.

Back:

back down = to withdraw from a position, opinion, or commitment

So, in this instance maybe I had a neighbor who wanted to put a fence and he didn't really care what my opinion was, so I maybe heard about it from somebody else that he was planning on putting this fence in between my yard and his yard, and I don't want that fence, and he probably needed to consult me first before going ahead with his plans, and in any event I don't want the fence so I confronted him and he backed down from that.

Front:

Neither the airline nor the pilots are willing to back down, so the strike will continue for a while longer.

Back:

back down = to withdraw from a position, opinion, or commitment

I know that in Brazil as in The United States strikes often occur. Maybe university professors don't think they're getting enough pay, or maybe the letter carriers feel that they don't have enough benefits and so they'll go on strike. And they have their set of demands, the workers have their set of demands and the company or a management has their set of set of plans. And sometimes that's also a confrontational situation in which they need to come to an agreement, and if neither of them back down from whatever their demands are, the strike will continue, indefinitely.

Front:

Neither side is willing to back down.

Back:

back down = to accept something you previously stated was wrong, and admit it.

In this example, two different opinions or perspectives are represented by two parties, and both refuse to change their position in the face of counter arguments.

Front:

Eventually, Roberto backed down and apologized.

Back:

back down = to accept something you previously stated was wrong, and admit it.

In this example, Roberto had previously stated something which he now considers incorrect, so he states something contrary to his previous statement, admitting he was wrong.

Front:

Jane backed down from her position on the budget.

Back:

back down = to accept something you previously stated was wrong, and admit it.

In this example, Jane has changed her mind regarding the budget, and admits it.

Front:

James tried to start a fight with Henry, but Henry backed down when the police arrived.

Back:

back down = to no longer assert yourself / to no longer insist on doing something

Perhaps Henry wanted to respond violently, but when the police arrived he decided that would be unwise, controlled himself, and no longer acted as if he wanted to retaliate.

Front:

I will never give up on my dream to attain fluency in Portuguese.

Back:

give up = to stop doing something that you are trying hard to do

So in this case I have an objective, a goal and I'm going to have some obstacles, it's going to be difficult, I'm going to get bored, it's going to get tiring. So, I am just not going to give up on that dream, I'm going to continue ahead.

Front:

A fierce competitor will never give up in the heat of battle.

Back:

give up = to stop doing something that you are trying hard to do

Again, this has to do with just, in spite of all obstacles just moving forward and never giving up. We talk a lot about this spirit of not wanting to give up in athletics. The best competitors, the best athletes, are those that will never give up, no matter how injured they are, no matter how tough the competition is, they are just determined to continue ahead and never give up.

Front:

I have been addicted to cigarettes for fifteen years and I'm finding it very difficult to give up smoking.

Back:

give up = to stop doing something that you do regularly

So in this case, it would be a positive thing if the person would give up this particular bad habit. A lot of us have bad habits that we should give up, maybe we eat too much, maybe we smoke or drink too much, maybe we spend too much time watching television. So, these are instances in which giving up is letting go and surrendering a habit or a behavior that is not beneficial for us.

Front:

I give up - tell me the answer!

Back:

give up = to stop trying / to admit you cannot do something

Someone has tried to find the answer to a question that they have been asked, but they now admit that they do not know the answer. 'I give up' therefore means 'I no longer want to try'.

Front:

They were forced to give up their home because they couldn't pay the mortgage.

Back:

give (something) up = To no longer hold onto something that you would rather keep

As these people were no longer able to make the required payments, they had to accept that they could not keep their home (and they therefore had to relinquish ownership).

Front:

I've given up trying to help her.

Back:

give up = to stop trying / to admit you cannot do something

Someone has been trying to help this woman, but for some reason they are no longer willing to try.

Front:

Most people gave up on him when he quit school, but he went back and earned his degree two years later.

Back:

give up on (someone) = to no longer have faith or belief in (someone)

Most people lost their belief that this person could achieve something positive when he left school. The implication is that people had come to believe that the person who left school would not benefit from any assistance or encouragement, as it would not make any difference to the student's attitude (or perceived lack of ability, perhaps).