

GETTING GET

The Glossary of a Wild Verb

by

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An Adventure in American English

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FOREWORD

Back in the late 1960's as a promising graduate student in linguistics, I maintained my family by working as a security guard. Many long studious nights were spent by the gate of a ball-bearing plant in a bright little watchman's shed, punctuating the hours with a time-clock amid roaring and shrilling machines. Since I was working on a dissertation on Russian word order, the job was ideal for digging in the scholarly mines. One evening between rounds I read about how Russian verbs occurring in similar constructions usually have similar or related meanings.*

"Constructions" had caught my eye, but the study didn't have much bearing on my dissertation topic. As I walked the hourly round among machines and bins of ball bearings in more sizes than you'd ever want, I got to thinking about Russian verbs that occur in lots of constructions. When back at my watchman's desk, just for academic calisthenics, I started to think up a list of English verbs like that.

Maybe I first thought of 'make' as in 'make out with someone' or 'make up with someone;' 'make something out' or 'make something up;' 'make off with something' or even the salacious 'make someone.' Or maybe it was 'take' as in 'take after someone,' 'take something off,' or an oddly contradictory 'take off on someone.' Then what do you do about 'keep' and 'hold?' But very soon in my casting about I hooked an example that just wouldn't quit—the verb 'get.'

Fascinated, for the rest of the night in my shed I played and made lists of constructions with 'get'—by no means as easy as it sounds. Each construction seemed to mean something radically different from the last. By dawn I'd only scratched the surface, and that afternoon in the library I found long lists of expressions in the Webster's and other authoritative dictionaries, yielding more material for my own list. But the sources were really chaotic and painfully incomplete. Already I saw that, strictly speaking, 'get' has no inherent meaning. One can only define the myriad constructions into which it's plugged, like a Joker in a hand of poker, a wild verb, if you will. Intrigued with this surprising insight, I went back to my research on Russian word order.

Over the many decades since, although I'm no longer in an academic profession, by simply listening to the way Americans talk, I've finally figured out how the very versatile verb 'get' works. My long stalking of this wild verb – a phenomenon which I suspect is unparalleled, or at least unmatched, in any other language – has led to this great long glossary of a single three-letter word!

* Apresyan, Yu. D., "Eksperimental'noe issledovanie semantiki russkogo glagola," Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka,' Moskva, 1967.

PREFACE -- *GET READY!**

This handbook was intended originally for learners of colloquial American English as a second language and shouldn't be considered as a guide for "literary" English. However, I do hope it will also amuse "native speakers" to visit with this fantastic verb. We never think about it but still use it constantly in our talking.

The wild verb 'get,' which always used to be strictly forbidden by English teachers in grade school, pops up in casual speech far more frequently than you'd imagine. From our first utterances as children, we "native speakers" internalize a complex, unconscious grammar of this verb, but those who come later to English as a second language – with only the rules of formal grammar – don't have a clue. They find our casual conversations difficult in good part because of this constant, unconscious use of 'get.' It's a colloquial code in which we signal an enormously wide range of actions, attitudes, emotions, intentions, and implications.

To make matters worse, the uses of 'get' often can be ambiguous, heavily dependent on the context of the conversation, elliptical (not completely expressed), or embedded in obscure idioms and fixed expressions. What the second-language learner often hears native speakers saying is not simply an unknown code, but often an inscrutable verbal shorthand.

In recent years linguists have grouped wild verbs like 'get' under a category called "phrasal" or multi-word verbs, claiming that each "phrase" like 'get up' and 'get out' is a separate verb. Indeed each phrase has a different meaning, but does that really make them different verbs? Why isn't a "phrasal" verb just a single verb that occurs in (lots of) phrases, like our little 'get?'

But simply calling the beast something that sounds vaguely obscene doesn't provide much information about the nature and behavior of the amazing verb 'get.' That can only be understood by considering its myriad phrases – in other words, by scientific observation of the wild thing in all its habits and habitats.

To do this, you're going to have to trek through the dense, steamy jungle of grammar. Fortunately, I'm pretty familiar with it after my long study of the wild one. Let me take you on a verb-hunting safari through that jungle.

This book is a glossary of the unconscious grammar of the wild verb 'get.' (Forgive my silliness, but you might say we're going on a "glossafari.") Each chapter will observe a prime type (or two or three) of phrase with 'get,' and following that are indices of the verb's phenomenal number of phrases and expressions (A) and of its stupendous range of meanings (B).

* [prepare, make ready (for a race, contest, etc.)]

INTRODUCTION -- *GET SET!**

But wait! Before we go trekking into that jungle of the English language where roams the wild verb ‘get,’ we’ll have to chop our way through some unavoidable grammatical underbrush. It won’t be too long, I promise, till you’ll spot the strange beast we seek.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ‘GET’ AND ITS RELATIONS

The verb ‘get’ is of very ancient lineage in the English language, probably a mainstay of conversational speech even before Anglo-Saxon times, and its uses have expanded broadly in the millennia since.

Being so old, the verb is quite naturally related to other English vocabulary. The verb ‘beget’ [**father, sire, engender**]** (past tense –‘begot’ or ‘begat,’ participle –‘begotten’) has a distinctly Biblical connotation, particularly in its alternate past tense form ‘begat.’ (Chapter 4 of the *Book of Genesis*, the generations of Adam, is sometimes called the “Begats.”) Another participle is more familiar: ‘misbegotten’ [**illegally begotten, illegitimate, mistakenly conceived**]. The noun ‘get’ [**offspring of a breeding**] is clearly related to ‘beget’. This noun also occurs in the technical expression ‘get-of-sire’ with the same meaning, and as the root of the archaic noun ‘getling’ [**child or brat**].

THE PARTS

‘Get’ is a very straightforward verb in the present tense, behaving by the rule of adding ‘s’ for third person singular: *I/you/we/they get – he/she/it gets*.

‘Get’ is also one of those very English verbs that change their vowel in the basic tense forms (principal parts):

Infinitive	to get
Present	get
Gerund	getting
Past	got
Participle:	gotten.

Immediately I must stress that while ‘gotten’ is the standard participle for American English, the standard for British English is ‘got.’ This is a major difference between the two dialects. To complicate the picture, the participle ‘got’ is also used in American English in a phrase to be covered in Chapter 1. Meanwhile for our American purposes the participle of ‘get’ is always ‘gotten.’

* [**prepare, make ready (last call or warning)**]

** The square braces [] are used throughout to indicate the definition of a word or phrase.

THE COMMAND FORM: *GET!* — (HEY! THERE'S ONE!)

Our first true sighting of the wild verb! All you have to do is use ‘get’ in the command form (imperative), and it has a very specific meaning: *Get!* [**Leave! Go away! Shoo! Scat!**]. This perfunctory command is often addressed to animals or bugs, but not infrequently also to children, and can be pronounced *Git!* With emphasis, it expands to *Get away!* or *Get out!* This phrase will be discussed in Chapter 7. And it also brings us to our very first

IDIOM ALERT!*

*Get out (of here)!*** [**disbelief**]

EXAMPLE:

Joe: I won the lottery!

John: Get out of here! No way, José!

THE CONJUGATION

Unfortunately, we still can't really see the jungle for the trees. This is the really hard part of the introduction, having to fight our way through all the moods and tenses of the verb. I'm afraid I have some bad news—Whoever told you that English verbs are easy—well, they lied.

The full conjugation of an English verb's tenses verges on the ridiculous, but an ability to use it is essential for proficiency in the language. A verb's full conjugation could well be seen as a huge, dense tree with many branches, or perhaps more appropriately like a verb's DNA, its genetically determined behavior.

Keep in mind that the conjugation is a “machine” that can be used with every one of the ‘get’ phrases we will encounter. Though it is terribly important, you may not care to read all the way through the following intimidating list. Just keep it as a reference for when you need to look up, for example, how to make the future perfect passive tense of some verb. But do read at least the Present Tense—to catch a glimpse of our wild verb at play (albeit in a footnote!).

All these conjugated forms of ‘get,’ (some of course being far less frequent than others), are grammatically correct, but except for the promised sighting of our verb, they have no literal meaning.

* We will go by Webster's definition of an idiom as “an expression in the usage of a language that is peculiar to itself ... in having a meaning that cannot be derived from the conjoined meaning of its elements.”

** Parentheses () are used throughout to indicate optional elements.

FULL CONJUGATION OF ‘GET’

PRESENT TENSE *(Generally, contractions are more casual/informal; fully articulated phrases are more emphatic/formal.):*

(simple)	I (/you/we/they) get/(he/she/it) gets
(emphatic)	I do get/it does get
(negative)	I do not (don't) get/it does not (doesn't) get*
(passive)	I am (I'm) gotten/it is (it's) gotten**
(negative)	I am (I'm) not*** gotten/it is not (isn't)*** gotten (Also: it's not gotten)
(progressive)	I am (I'm) getting/it is (it's) getting
(negative)	I am (I'm) not getting/it is not (isn't) getting (Also: it's not getting)
(passive)	I am (I'm) being gotten/it is (it's) being gotten
(negative)	I am (I'm) not being gotten/it is not (isn't) being gotten (Also: It's not being gotten)
(perfect)	I have (I've) gotten/it has (it's) gotten
(negative)	I have not (haven't) gotten (Also: I've not gotten) / it has not (hasn't) gotten (Also: he's not gotten)
(passive)	I have (I've) been gotten/ it has (it's) been gotten
(negative)	I have not (haven't) been gotten (Also: I've not been gotten) / it has not (hasn't) been gotten (Also: it's not been gotten)
(progressive)	I have (I've) been getting/it has (it's) been getting
(negative)	I have not (haven't) been getting (Also: I've not been getting) / it has not (hasn't) been getting (Also: it's not been getting)
(passive)	I have (I've) been being gotten/it has (it's) been being gotten
(negative)	I have not (haven't) been being gotten (Also: I've not been being gotten) / it has not (hasn't) been being gotten (Also: it's not been being gotten)

* A substandard usage is to generalize the ‘do’/‘don’t’ to the third person singular as in he/she/it do/don’t get.

** The present passive form ‘it is gotten,’ as well as other passive forms, does have a specific meaning: **[received, obtained]**, and the phrase it comes from will be covered in Chapter 3. There is a similar intimation with a person, but hardly as immediate.

*** Another substandard (even if an ancient and frequent) contraction for ‘am not’ and ‘is not’ is ‘ain’t.’ It is definitely not recommended.

PAST TENSE: (*Using 'it' is enough since the forms don't change.*)

(simple)	it got
(emphatic)	it did get
(negative)	it did not (didn't) get
(passive)	it was gotten/it was gotten
(negative)	it was not (wasn't) gotten
(progressive)	it was getting
(negative)	it was not (wasn't) getting
(passive)	it was being gotten
(negative)	it was not (wasn't) being gotten
(perfect)	it had (it'd) gotten
(negative)	it had not (hadn't) gotten (Also: it'd not gotten)
(passive)	it had (it'd) been gotten
(negative)	it had not (hadn't) been gotten (Also: it'd not been gotten)
(progressive)	it had (it'd) been getting
(negative)	it had not (hadn't) been getting (Also: it'd not been getting)
(passive)	it had (it'd) been being gotten
(negative)	it had not (hadn't) been being gotten

FUTURE TENSE: (*'I' contracts more neatly with the helper verb 'will.'*)

(simple)	I'll get
(emphatic)	I will get
(negative)	I will not (won't) get (Also: I'll not get)
(passive)	I will (I'll) be gotten
(negative)	I will not (won't) be gotten (Also: I'll not be gotten)
(progressive)	I will (I'll) be getting
(negative)	I will not (won't) be getting (Also: I'll not be getting)
(passive)	I will (I'll) be being gotten
(negative)	I will not (won't) be being gotten (Also: I'll not be being gotten)
(perfect)	I will (I'll) have gotten
(negative)	I will not (won't) have gotten (Also: I'll not have gotten)
(passive)	I will (I'll) have been gotten
(negative)	I will not (won't) have been gotten (Also: I'll not have been gotten)
(progressive)	I will (I'll) have been getting
(negative)	I will not (won't) have been getting (Also: I'll not have been getting)
(passive)	I will (I'll) have been being gotten
(negative)	I will not (won't) have been being gotten (Also: I'll not have been being gotten)

CONDITIONAL: *(While the helper verb for the conditional is 'would,' several others like 'could,' 'should,' 'might,' 'may,' and 'must' behave similarly. Only 'would' contracts with pronouns (to 'd); the others will only contract with 'not' and 'have.')*:

(simple)	I'd get
(emphatic)	I would get
(negative)	I would not (wouldn't) get (Also: I'd not get)
(passive)	I would (I'd) be gotten
(negative)	I would not (wouldn't) be gotten
(progressive)	I would (I'd) be getting
(negative)	I would not (wouldn't) be getting (Also: I'd not be getting)
(passive)	I would (I'd) be being gotten
(negative)	I would not (wouldn't) be being gotten (Also: I'd not be being gotten)
(perfect)	I would have (would've) gotten (Also: I'd have gotten)
(negative)	I would not (wouldn't) have gotten (Also: I'd not have gotten)
(passive)	I would have (would've) been gotten (Also: I'd have been gotten)
(negative)	I would not (wouldn't) have been gotten (Also: I'd not have been gotten)
(progressive)	I would have (would've) been getting (Also: I would (I'd) have been getting)
(negative)	I would not (wouldn't) have been getting (Also: I'd not have been getting)
(passive)	I would have (would've) been being gotten (Also: I'd have been being gotten)
(negative)	I would not (wouldn't) have been being gotten

At last we seem to have made it through the trees, but before you take a look at the jungle itself, I have to add one more thing. All that bother in the conjugation about contractions wasn't really irrelevant. Quite simply, the verb 'get' exists largely for talking and a large part of talking is expressing levels of emphasis. This happens a lot through contractions, as in the conditional perfect:

I would have gotten	(formal or emphatic)
I would've gotten	(neutral, flat statement)
I'd have gotten	(informal or casual)
I'd've gotten	(very casual).

The contraction of 'have,' ('ve), can sound very like the word 'of,' as in the "uneducated" expressions 'would of,' 'could of,' 'should of,' etc., and especially in the last example 'I'd of.'

Enough of all this thorny grammatical stuff! Let's—

CHAPTER 1 – *GET GOING!**

Here we go! Just look at that jungle! First thing, you should know that several other very fabulous creatures also live here—the ponderous parts of speech.

To be simplistic, the English language expresses a reality made up primarily of *THINGS* (nouns) and *ACTIONS* (verbs). Secondary elements are the *QUALITIES* of both *THINGS* (adjectives) and *ACTIONS* (adverbs). And for all intents and purposes, any other words are just used for connecting, constructing, and otherwise lubricating the mechanisms, like those helper verbs in the tenses. These “function words” are a lot like vines hanging about in the language jungle.

The next really big division of the English linguistic reality is that between types of *THINGS*. First and foremost, there is the person (human being), whom we will call *SOMEONE*; then there is absolutely every other object, item (including animals), or concept in the universe, which can be called *SOMETHING*.

Nonetheless, there’s yet a third kind of *THING*, namely that space within which all those *SOMEONEs* and *SOMETHINGs* exist, or the way we’re doing it, the *SOMEWHERE*. (This is why the standard definition of a noun, “the name of a person, place or thing,” fairly much does the job.)

In the same vein, please consider that the *QUALITIES* (adjectives and adverbs) essentially express *SOMEHOW*, and any *ACTION* (verb) can be generalized as *TO DO SOMETHING*. These are the names of the basic building blocks in the prime phrases with ‘get,’ and their combinations determine the meanings of the verb.

Our first real sighting of the verb comes in that peculiarity already mentioned, that British participle ‘got’ (instead of ‘gotten’). It produces our first meaningful prime phrases with ‘get.’ (However, both turn out to be really rather ephemeral.)

1. HAVE/HAS GOT SOMEONE/SOMETHING** [have, possess]

This phrase looks for all the world like the present perfect tense with British English participle ‘got’ and the helper verb ‘have/has.’ (Except for special emphasis, the helpers normally contract to ‘ve and ‘s.) But it’s actually just plain old present tense, as in:

“I’ve got a lovely bunch of coconuts.” (line from early 20th century song)

In addition, you can say that you *’ve got a son, daughter, brother, lover, etc.*

* [begin, start moving]

** I’ll cite and number the separate “prime” phrases with ‘get’ this way with the slash (/) to indicate alternatives.

This phrase is clearly present tense because the other tenses are

I had a lovely bunch of coconuts. I'll have a lovely bunch of coconuts

The 'got' disappears. It only exists in this phrase in the present tense. Curiously, in British English the 'got' participle remains in the past tense:

"...Because she thought the sun
Had got no business to be there."

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

It's sometimes hard to recognize this phrase in very casual speech because the contracted verb can entirely disappear, as in:

"I Got Rhythm" (title of 1930's song by George and Ira Gershwin)

"I Got You Babe" (title of 1965 song by Sonny and Cher)

Then there can also be a whole bunch of levels of emphasis, as in:

Jane: I got rhythm!

Jill: What did you say?

Jane: I've got rhythm.

Jill: You think so?

Jane: Well, I have got rhythm!

Jill: Since when?

Jane: I'm telling you I have rhythm!

Jill: In your dreams!

Jane: I don't care what you think—I do have rhythm!

Jill: You haven't got / don't have the rhythm of a speed bump!

Jane: I have too got / do too have rhythm!

Jill: You haven't either got / don't either have rhythm!

Jane: I have so got / do so have rhythm!

You can also use the really emphatic expressions with just about any verb that makes good sense. The above disagreement might have been about something else, and Jane could have insisted, "I do so know Tom Cruise!"

As a final note to this very possessive phrase, in rural dialects you'll sometimes hear it in a reflexive form, like when someone *'s got him a good dog, big house*, etc.

2. HAVE/HAS GOT TO DO SOMETHING [have to, must]

The next prime phrase combines that same alternate participle with a verb:

*I've got to go (to the store).**

This sentence implies a bit more urgency or immediacy than if you merely 'have to go (to the store).' Again, the 'got' simply disappears in the past and future tenses:

I had to go to the store. I'll have to go to the store.

When the statement is casual, (though not necessarily less urgent), the 'got to' tends to contract as well:

I've gotta go to the store.

And when even more casual, or more rushed, the contraction of 'have/has' can be totally dropped:

*I gotta go to the store.***

I trust this first foray into the linguistic bush hasn't been too frightening. But these two 'get' phrases are really no more than fleeting visions of our verb. They're no more substantial than the fluttering insects and butterflies of the forest – and just about as common as bugs in everyday speech.

Now it's high time to set off on our expedition for real!

* As will be explained in Chapter 8, *get to go (to the store)* has almost an opposite meaning.

** Be warned that later on the combination 'got to' will never contract to 'gotta.'

CHAPTER 2 -- *GET IT?**

We'll start our hike with some views of the wild verb in an aggressive mood—in combination with nouns. And there's a considerable bunch of such.

But first, a bit of explanation about the way I've named the prime 'get' phrases. All the elements listed in the name are essential to it. Some may be optional, shown in parentheses (); others are necessary, if only implied, and are indicated by the curly brackets { }.

What's more, the name of each prime phrase is intended to be very precise. If you add or subtract an element, the meaning can change radically.

The first phrase of this sort to consider is actually an exception, of course! It causes a lot of confusion when you try to define the wild verb and should be dealt a quick slash with your machete to clear the trail into the jungle.

3. DO/GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING [*replacement verb*]

For the spoken language, context is an enormously powerful thing. When something's perfectly clear from the context or situation, often you won't articulate it again. For instance, if it's obvious or assumed what an action is, we can say merely 'do.' If you're standing at a sink full of dirty dishes, you'll probably just say, instead of 'wash the dishes,' that you're going to 'do the dishes.'

'Do' is the most frequent replacement or substitute verb, popping up all the time when you don't want to repeat a verb, including in answers like, "Yes, I do." (In fact, we made the same substitution in Chapter 1 in generalizing a verb as simply TO DO SOMETHING.)

However, there are several rather mundane, everyday activities in which 'get' also can serve as a replacement verb, mostly when the exact meaning is contextually determined. (Apart from 'the dishes,' one doesn't usually 'do' the others below.)

Frequent replacement expressions with contextual meanings:

<i>get the door</i>	[answer/open/close]
<i>get the light</i>	[turn on/off]
<i>get the dishes</i>	[wash/dry]
<i>get the phone</i>	[answer]
<i>get breakfast/lunch/dinner</i>	[cook/prepare/pay for]
<i>get help/the police/a doctor</i>	[summon, call for]
<i>get a customer, etc.</i>	[handle, take care of, do whatever]

* [Do you understand?]

Again, in the jungle the power of context is really, truly awesome. As another for instance, no matter what someone may be doing, you can volunteer to help by saying, *Let me get that for you!* or *I'll get that!* And depending on whatever that action is, you've got another meaning of 'get.' Or this could be seen as simply a casual substitute for the formal replacement verb 'do,' as in *Let me do that for you!* or *I'll do that!* Either way, this replacement usage is probably the very best example of how the verb 'get' can act like a "wild card," like the Joker in a poker game!

It really helps to understand this third foible, (the others being Phrases 1 and 2), before we move on to our first full-scale prime phrase with 'get.' Yes, I know it looks a lot like the one we were just talking about, but Phrase 4 has a single, very distinct meaning, the one used in the title of this book.

4. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING [understand, comprehend]

Phrase 4 has no formal optional elements, and I want to stress once again the importance of a strict reading of each phrase, ignoring the temptation to expand it with other elements. To do so is generally to jump over into another phrase, and we'll deal with those soon enough.

You'll usually *get the drift, gist, joke, point, etc., (of something)*. Of a recent president of the United States, it's been said that he just *doesn't get it*. You can also express various shades of understanding by adding adjectives, like *get someone/something (clear, straight, wrong, etc.)* When you want to assure somebody that you understand, you say *I got you/it!* or *Gotcha!**

IDIOM ALERT! *get the hang of {doing} something*
[understand, figure out]

EXAMPLE: John: How's it going with your violin lessons?
Joe: I just can't get the hang of playing that thing!

In fact, the title of this book could well have been "*Getting the Hang of Get.*" But that would have been too obscure. A frequent expression: *get a handle on {doing} something* [understand, figure out] is not an idiom in our sense of the thing because its words actually do make a certain amount of sense. Then there's another way to say the same thing: *get the knack of {doing} something*.

* The contraction of 'got you' to 'gotcha' is multiply ambiguous. Watch for its occurrence in a number of the following phrases—with different meanings.

5. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING {BY/AROUND SOMETHING}
[sieve, hold, catch]

As soon as you let some other element into the structure of the ‘get’ phrase, the meaning changes radically. The first element we’ll add has to do with physical contact. That is, the second SOMETHING is a part of the person or thing. For example, someone could *get you by the arm, nose, sleeve, etc.*, or *around the neck, waist, etc.* Or you could *get a cup by its handle, the paper by its corner, etc.*

Sometimes the expression will be expanded to: *get ahold of/on someone/ something {by something}*. A couple frequent expressions are *Gotcha!* (Here our ambiguous one means [**I caught you!**].) and *get a tiger by the tail*.

This last example I believe is a very appropriate metaphor for our present situation, since we have now essentially gotten our wild verb ‘get’ by its tail. The thing to remember is that once you’ve gotten a tiger by its tail, you’ve now got a tiger by the tail! And you can reasonably expect some activity from the tiger pretty quick. Get a good hold of that tail and hang on to your hat. It’ll be quite a ride.

6. GET SOMEONE
[aggravate, irritate, perturb, puzzle, confuse, trick,
broadly: affect, usually negatively]

The meaning of this phrase is almost the opposite of that of Phrase 4. Its range of meanings again depends heavily on the context. Often *it gets me* [**aggravate**] that something always happens or *gets me* [**puzzle**] how a trick is done, or you might *get someone* [**trick**] with a practical joke. Generally in this phrase the exclamation *Gotcha!* means [**I tricked you!**]. All too often you’ll hear questions answered, *(You) Got me!* Or *(It) Gets me!* [**I don’t know!**] When you *get someone good*, you’ve been particularly successful in the effort

IDIOM ALERT! *get someone’s goat* [**aggravate, irritate**]

EXAMPLE: John: See! I was right!
 Joe: It gets my goat the way you’re always right!

7. GET PREPOSITION SOMEONE [relate, usually negatively]

Since we're talking about spoken language, it's important to note that these prepositions are pronounced with extra stress:

<i>get after someone</i>	[pursue, harass, nag]
<i>get at someone</i>	[attack]
<i>get on someone</i>	[exert pressure on]
<i>get on(to) someone</i>	[punish, reprimand]
<i>get to someone</i>	[reach; affect]

A related expression is to *get on someone's nerves* [aggravate, irritate]. And since here's a logical place to include it, I should mention that you can also *get at something* [intend, mean (v.)].

8. GET SOMEONE {WITH SOMETHING}{SOMEWHERE} = GET SOMEONE {SOMEWHERE}{WITH SOMETHING} [strike, hit, hurt]

(Yep! You can switch the order of the elements!) The physical contact is usually SOMEWHERE on the SOMEONE's body. You could *get someone in the eye with a fist, on the head with a rock, etc.* It's also possible to *get something with something*, like *get a ball with a bat*. In Phrase 8, *Gotcha!* means [I've hit you!].)

Unfortunately, one can also *get it in the neck* [be seriously hurt, affected]. To make children behave, old-fashioned parents, would threaten them with: *Boogeyman will get you!* As in Phrase 6, the common threat: *I'm going to get you (good)!* might or might not portend violence.

IDIOM ALERT! *out to get someone* [with harmful intention (adjective)]

EXAMPLE: Jill: You sure have a mean boss.
Jane: Yeh, I think he's out to get me!

Probably related to this phrase—or to Phrase 5—is *get someone (for {doing} something)*, which in the proper context could also mean [apprehend, arrest].

On the other hand, in an intimate context, to simply *get someone* (with politely unmentionable SOMETHINGs and SOMEWHEREs) can also mean [have sexual relations with], and an archaic expression seems to relate to this meaning: *get someone with child* [impregnate]. (There's also bound to be a connection here to that ancestral verb 'beget' [father, sire, engender] which was mentioned in the tedious Introduction.)

CHAPTER 3 – *GET A CLUE!**

We've just been watching 'get' play around in phrases with that very special building block SOMEONE (occasionally including SOMETHINGS and even SOMEWHEREs as minor elements). Now let's keep going on down this trail and see what our wild one does in simple phrases with SOMETHING. (Don't worry. You'll understand later why these are simple.)

9. GET SOMETHING (INTANGIBLE) [experience]

Though this phrase looks quite plain, its definition is obviously very broad. Right now we are dealing only with an intangible SOMETHING, that is, not a material item. In fact, depending on the specific type of intangible SOMETHING, the phrase embraces a perfect swarm of meanings, all having to do with one or another kind of experience.

Perhaps the very purest example of this is when the SOMETHING is a weather condition: *get rain, snow, hail, etc.* [**experience, have**]. Of course you can 'have' rain (as a condition) only after you 'get' it (after the condition starts).

A great example is when the SOMETHING is a mental process or condition: *get an idea, thought, inspiration, feeling, premonition, hunch, etc.* [**experience mentally, conceive mentally**] But the usual verb that really means to [**come up with**] an idea, etc., is [**get**]*—*which means that here 'get' is its own best definition!

It's important to understand that, like with rain, only after you 'get' an idea can you 'have' an idea. Then later maybe you'll *forget* [**cease to remember**] it. Here we've spotted the wild verb hiding inside a whole new word, and the logic of the connection between 'get' and 'forget' seems evident.

Most frequent in this phrase are SOMETHINGS that deal with a physical condition, usually not very positive: *get a headache, cold, broken arm, disease, cramp, etc.* [**experience physically: contract, come down with, catch, suffer**]. (Don't confuse *She got a headache.* with the possessive Phrase 1, as in: *She's got a headache.*) Of course, such physical conditions are almost infinite in number.

One can also experience some positive things physically, as in: *get a boost, buzz, charge, lift, jolt, rush, etc.* [**be energized**]. And our wild verb also can work with emotional conditions: *get a feeling, fright, kick, scare, shock, surprise, thrill, etc.* [**experience emotionally**].

Curiously, using that plain old pronoun 'it' makes the meaning painfully clear, as in: *You're really going to get it now!* [**be punished, reprimanded**]. And ironically, you can also *get it good* [**be punished or reprimanded severely**].

* [**Find a clue! Start to understand!**]

Meanwhile, there's a whole big bunch of SOMETHINGs used in frequent expressions, (including occasional tangible items, metaphorically). A haphazard list shows a wide range of experiential meanings:

<i>get the axe, boot, door, old heave-ho</i>	[be ejected, rejected]
<i>get the blues</i>	[become depressed, sad]
<i>get the shaft, short end of the stick</i>	[lose]
<i>get a hankering (for something)</i>	[want, desire]
<i>get the hots for someone/something</i>	[desire (usually sexually)]
<i>get a crush (on someone)</i>	[become infatuated]
<i>get the heebie-jeebies, jitters, shakes, willies</i>	[become disturbed, nervous]
<i>get a burr under one's saddle, one's bowels</i>	
<i>in an uproar, one's pants in a bunch,</i>	
<i>one's nose out of joint</i>	[become upset, angry]
<i>get a taste, whiff of something</i>	[experience through senses]
<i>get a kick/laugh (from/out of someone/something)</i>	[be amused]
<i>get a life</i>	[experience, live]
<i>get one's jollies (from {doing} something)</i>	[enjoy]
<i>get a whim/wild hair</i>	[act on impulse, caprice]
<i>get wind of something</i>	[hear about]
<i>get a second wind</i>	[catch one's breath when running (also as metaphor)]
<i>get a grip, hold (on someone/something)</i>	[control, manage]
<i>get a/the jump on someone/something</i>	[ambush, apprehend]
<i>get a fix (on someone/something)</i>	[focus on, aim at]
<i>get a look at/glimpse of someone/something</i>	[see, observe]
<i>get an urge (to do something)</i>	[feel like, want]
<i>get cold feet</i>	[become frightened]

IDIOM ALERT! *get a load of someone/something*
[see someone/something attractive or remarkable]

EXAMPLE: Joe: Now that sure was some pretty woman!
John: Yeh! Did you get a load of her vibrato?

10. GET SOMETHING {FROM SOMEONE}
[receive, obtain, borrow, buy, take, steal]

Well, plain old Phrase 9 certainly had a flurry of definitions, but I told you to hold on to that tail. Now let's turn to tangible SOMETHINGS, where again there's a wide range of meanings. And the context makes all the difference, in particular, the philanthropic intentions of the SOMEONE or the "gettee."

In the case that the SOMEONE willingly and actively relinquishes or sends the SOMETHING, you'll *get a letter, present, etc.* [**receive**]. It's equally possible to 'get' an intangible SOMETHING this way, like: *get attention, resistance, respect, satisfaction, etc.* More in the sense of {**obtain**}, you'd *get a date, job, work, etc.*

Now let's say that the SOMEONE is willing, but doesn't actually send the SOMETHING. Or maybe it doesn't matter what the arrangement is, but one way or the other, you wind up 'getting' the item, as in: *I got a car from John.* [**obtain**]

Then there's the context in which the SOMETHING isn't given but loaned, and now *I got a car from John.* means [**borrow**]. Next, if the 'getting' involves payment, *I got a car from John.* means [**buy, purchase**].

In the same vein, if the SOMEONE isn't necessarily aware of or agreeable to the 'getting,' *I got a car from John.* could mean [**take**], and with enough bad intention on the part of the "getter," it might very well degenerate to [**steal**]. In that case the item becomes *ill-gotten gains* [**obtained wrongly**].

In less "cultured" dialects, they sometimes use other prepositions than 'from,' and it's there that the differing meanings become apparent. In the sense of [**receive, obtain, borrow, or buy**], you *get something off (of) someone*; but if you mean [**take, steal**], you'll *get something out of someone*.

This is as good a place as any to remind you about the passive voice of our wild verb. You may recall that way back in that gruesome conjugation we got a glimpse of 'get' and I said we'd see it again. Well, here it is. If you *got a car from John*, then a *car was gotten from John (by you)*. Intangible SOMETHINGSs like colds, etc., can also be 'gotten.' Let's use the symbol ⇔ to indicate phrases that "mutate" into each other, or two ways to say the same thing. Then the relationship between the active and passive voices can be shown as:

Someone gets something. ⇔ Something is gotten by someone.

Later on we'll have more need of this symbol, but don't worry— you won't be using the passive very much.

TIME OUT!

Since we've just been standing around anyway, let's take a little break. By now, both you and the metaphor need one. While you rest, I want to talk about something weird that you probably haven't heard before: There are actually two ways to say 'no,' that is, to make a negative, and 'get' is a wonderful example.

You may also recall that the negative is made with the "do not (don't)" helper verb. If you *didn't get (any) presents*, this is a flat statement of fact, but you can also negate the SOMETHING. If you *got no presents*, it might intimate that maybe you had expected to.

There's also a curious implication in the present tense of most verbs, and 'get' is no different. If you *get presents*, it implies something like a rule or constant condition, and it's the same if you *don't get (any) presents* or *get no presents*.

A silly (and quite ungrammatical) example comes to mind:

"You gets no bread with one meatball."

(line from a 1944 song "One Meatball" by Hy Zaret and Lou Singer)

Speaking of ungrammatical, in "uneducated" speech (which is a polite way to say "bad English"), the combination of these two alternatives produces the unnatural double negative: *I don't get no presents*. And three just make it that much wronger: *I don't never get no presents*. This is also how we got the plaintive (and stylistically effective):

"(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" (title of 1965 song by The Rolling Stones)

Stylistics aside, in speaking good English you should never, never use double negatives! They're wrong.

11. GET SOMETHING TO SOMEONE [deliver]

This relatively tame phrase may well be one of the simplest we're going to meet, as in: *get a message, package, etc., to someone* [deliver]. Notice that the 'to someone' is required; without it, we go back to the meaning of Phrase 10.

In spite of that simplicity, there's still context to deal with. For instance, if you *get a stick to someone*, you could actually be delivering the stick forcefully. It could be a restatement of Phrase 8: *get someone somewhere with something* [hit], or a replacement use for 'take a stick to someone' as in Phrase 3. You can also *get something after someone* [pursue with, attack with]. This produces a three-way ⇔ situation:

X gets Y {somewhere} with something [hit] ⇔
Y gets something somewhere (from X) [be hit] ⇔
X gets something to/after Y {somewhere} [hit].

12. GET SOMETHING {(AT) SOMEWHERE} [obtain: buy, find, come by]

Once again the context is needed to provide the precise shade of meaning. If you *get a shirt at the store*, in all likelihood, it means [buy], but if you *get a mushroom in the woods*, it would mean [find]. In the right situation, just like in Phrase 10, it could even extend to obtaining by theft! Or in general:

“You can get anything you want at Alice’s Restaurant.”
 (line from 1960’s song “Alice’s Restaurant” by Arlo Guthrie)

Often a person will ask you to *go get something* or *go and get something*. That’s where the noun *go-getter* comes from, meaning someone who goes out and ‘gets’ what he wants, [motivated person]. This brings us to the next phrase.

13. GET {SOMEONE} SOMETHING ⇔ GET SOMETHING {FOR SOMEONE} [bring, fetch, provide, procure]

These two “mutations” are very frequently used, and the context will always determine the meaning. For example, you could *get me a cup of coffee* or *get a cup of coffee for me* [bring, fetch], but without even physically bringing an item, you can *get us a car* or *get me a theater ticket* [provide, procure]. As a matter of fact, here in this phrase with an “indirect object,” the specific context can make our wild verb mean as many things as it meant in *get something* (Phrase 10): [receive, obtain, borrow, buy, take, steal].

Now, don’t go thinking we’ve tamed the tiger. This little wild verb still has lots more tricks to play. We’ve hardly begun!

CHAPTER 4 -- *GET REAL!**

Around this next bend in the trail, we're going to see an almost docile side of our wild verb. When it plays around with the kind of *SOMEHOW* that describes a *SOMEONE* or *SOMETHING*, it's rather like a big gentle bovine. In combination with adjectives, 'get' makes some very useful phrases.

14. GET {TO BE} *SOMEHOW*(ADJECTIVE) [become]

This phrase with an adjective has only one meaning no matter what adjective you use. (The 'to be' is usually only said for emphasis, but it is always understood.) That being the case, let's do a silly alphabetical sampling of examples. You can: *get angry, busy, cold, drunk, envious, fat, greedy, hungry, itchy, jealous, kinky, lazy, mad, nice, old, pretty, queasy, rich, sick, tall, ugly, vain, warm, x...* Oh, well, that's the idea anyway.

Strangely, there's one rogue adverb that also works in this phrase like an adjective: *get down* [**become depressed**]. Occasionally one can even *get down in the dumps*.

Of course, a *SOMETHING* can also 'get somehow,' like a 'tree' *getting green* or a 'towel' *getting dry*. Very frequently you'll hear that 'it' *gets dark, late, cold, etc.*, meaning the general environment or situation.

Occasionally we make adjectives with prepositional phrases that mean a condition. There's a fair number of such frequently used expressions:

<i>get in a hurry, rush</i>	[hurry, rush]
<i>get in(to)/out of shape</i>	[become fit/grow weak]
<i>get in(to) a frenzy, huff, rage, state, snit</i> <i>or tizzy (dudgeon)</i>	[become upset]
<i>get in(to) a fix, mess, trouble</i>	[encounter difficulty]
<i>get off balance, kilter, message</i>	[lose balance, etc.]
<i>get on a roll</i>	[become lucky, successful]
<i>get out of order, sorts, whack</i>	[become disordered, broken]
<i>get out of breath</i>	[lose (one's) breath]
<i>get under the weather</i>	[become ill, indisposed]
<i>get under way</i>	[begin]

* [become realistic, i.e., stop pretending]

15. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING {TO BE} SOMEHOW(ADJECTIVE)
[cause to become]

This phrase is just an expansion of Phrase 14 with another person or thing doing the actual ‘getting somehow.’ For example, you can *get me (all) wet*, or *get your shoes muddy*. Understandably, the adverb ‘down’ can once more work as an adjective when SOMEONE or SOMETHING *gets someone down* [**cause to be depressed**]. More prepositional phrases can be used as adjectives, as in frequent expressions:

<i>get someone in(to) a fix, mess, trouble, etc.</i>	[cause {to be} in difficulty]
<i>get someone into a rage, tizzy, etc.</i>	[enrage, upset]
<i>get someone/something under control</i>	[subdue, control]
<i>get something in order</i>	[arrange, organize]

16. GET TO BE SOMEONE/SOMETHING
[become]

While this is not a SOMEHOW phrase, it produces the same meaning for ‘get.’ (Be warned of an inherent ambiguity here because of another phrase with other verbs to be discussed in Chapter 8.) You can *get to be a cute kid, a bore, a big shot, a teacher* or just about anything you want. As well as SOMEONES, SOMETHINGS can do it, like when *your room gets to be a mess*, or *a chore gets to be a pain (in the neck)*.

INTERRUPTION -- *NOW GET THIS!**

Okay, folks! I need you to gather round and take it easy for a minute again. We've got to talk about the other kinds of SOMEHOW. Besides adjectives you've got to deal with the type of SOMEHOW that modifies verbs, (i.e., adverbs), and they come in a number of shapes.

See all these vines hanging around in the trees? The tiny lacey ones high up in the branches are the adverbs of quality like 'beautifully,' 'brightly,' 'cleverly,' 'deeply,' 'quickly,' etc. Our wild verb doesn't climb around in that kind of adverb unless they make sense. But they aren't essential elements in any basic 'get' phrase.

The vines you need to check out are those great thick ones that I decided long ago to call "adjuncts." There are a great many adjuncts: *about, above, across, ahead, along, around, before, behind, below, beneath, beyond, by, down, in, inside, near, off, on, out, outside, over, past, through, to, under(neath), and up*, to name most of them. An adjunct operates on its own with verbs, like 'sit *down*' or 'stand *up*,' or it can also work like a preposition in a phrase with an object, like '*down* the tube,' '*up* the hill,' and so on.

(Quite separate from the dual-purpose adjunct, there are also many plain old prepositions that require at least an elliptical object: *after, against, among(st), at, beside, between, during, for, from, into, of, onto, toward(s), unto, upon, and with*, again to name most.)

Putting the adjuncts and prepositions together makes a huge number of compounds that you'll rarely find in dictionaries: *across from/to, along from/to, along with, around from/to, away from/to/with, back at/by/from/to, back in/into/out (of)/with, behind in, by from/to, by with, down from/to, down in(to), down on, down with, in among, in at, in from/to, in on, in with, near to, off from/to, off on, off with, on from/to, on with, out from/to, out with, over from/to, over on, over with, together with, through from/to, through with, up against, up from/to, up on, and up with.*

All this stuff about prepositions will come later. Right now we're going to watch the adjunct vines. As a matter of fact, look over there and you'll notice our wild verb swinging on those vines right now. If you'll allow me to switch metaphors yet again, it sure does look like a bunch of mischievous monkeys!

* [understand (formally: Now hear this!)]

CHAPTER 5 -- *GET ON WITH IT!**

The first bunch of monkeys, simple combinations of ‘get’ with various adjuncts, can at times *get hairy* [**become complicated, troublesome**] (Phrase 14). Once again, don’t even think about adding any other elements to these phrases because—as you’ll see soon enough—they’d probably come to mean something entirely different.

17. GET SOMEHOW_(ADJUNCT) [deal with the world or reality]

Just a few adjuncts operate in this basic phrase, all with related meanings:

✧ *get ahead* [advance, improve one’s situation]

This is how to express the common human striving.

✧ *get along* [cope, manage]

On seeing someone after a long time, you might well ask in a very general way, *How are you getting along?* Or when asked how you’re doing, a noncommittally positive response would be *I’m getting along*.

✧ *get behind* [lag, fall behind]

This is a wonderful pair of opposites with ‘ahead,’ the one being the great hope of mankind, and the other his common fear. In between these two lie other expressions, which are what usually happens.

✧ *get by* [manage, survive]

Using ‘by’ implies *getting along with difficulty*. People generally hope that they’ll *get by somehow*.

✧ *get on* [cope, manage]

Asking how someone is *getting on* is very like *getting along*, but this phrase seems indirectly to ask about the other person’s physical condition.

✧ *get on* [grow late or old]

Of course there had to be an exception—and one that looks just like the preceding! It wouldn’t be unusual to remark that the time is *getting on (towards four o’clock)* or that Uncle Albert is *getting on (in years)*.

* [proceed, continue]

Though it has nothing to do with Phrase 17 or the meaning of dealing with reality, this really is the only logical place to include a certain choice tidbit. Perhaps related to that first idiom, *Get out (of here)!* [**disbelief**], there's yet another idiom to be mentioned:

IDIOM ALERT! *as all get out* [**extremely, as much as possible**]

EXAMPLE: Joe: What did you think of her dirty trick?

John: That made me mad as all get out!

18. GET SOMEHOW_(ADJUNCT) {WITH SOMEONE} [relate in some way, usually positively]

Now when you add another little element, suddenly there's a whole new crowd of monkeys! Several adjuncts operate in this phrase and again produce a fairly cohesive cluster of meanings (sometimes using 'at,' 'of,' or 'to' instead of 'with').

✧ *get ahold of someone* [**contact**]

This first example is a bit of a trick as it's simply Phrase 5 as a metaphor.

✧ *get along {with someone}* [**relate peaceably**]

You will often hear that two people *get along {with each other}* (*like two peas in a pod*). Harried mothers often ask children, "Why can't you just get along?"

✧ *get back with/to someone* [**renew contact**]

Generally this phrase is used a lot in telephone communications. Somebody might promise to *get back with/to you (in a week, etc.) (about something or other)*, and you'd naturally expect a phone call.

✧ *get back at someone* ⇔ *get someone back* [**pay back, avenge**]

Same adjunct, different preposition, and you get a much different meaning. The reversible structure is also a definite exception for Phrase 18, and one wonders where the 'at' went. Usually you would *get back at someone (for {doing} something)*. Besides, there's yet another expression (irreversible this time) with almost the proper structure and a similar meaning:

✧ *get even {with someone}* [**take revenge**]

Although it rather oddly uses an adjective instead of a real adjunct, this expression clearly belongs here because you'd never say, 'get {to be} even {with someone}' as in Phrase 14.

- ✧ *get down {with someone}* [enjoy, have fun]
 This phrase is definitely colloquial. Many would call it pure “slang.” If somebody suggests that you *get down (and dirty)*, it’s probably an invitation to a great party or celebration—or possibly to a sexual adventure. These same words can mean exactly the opposite, as in Phrase 14: *get down [become depressed]*.
- ✧ *get in with someone* [develop relationship]
 Generally people will try to ‘get in with’ someone important or influential. Consequently, there’s a hint of insinuation or manipulation in this phrase.
- ✧ *get off {with someone}* [achieve orgasm]
 I needn’t elaborate—except to say that this implies extremely good relations.
- ✧ *get on {with someone}* [relate well]
 Somehow this phrase is more positive than ‘get along.’ People might *get along poorly*, but rarely do they *ge on poorly*. More likely, they would *get on beautifully*.
- ✧ *get together {with someone}* [meet with, assemble]
 The usual way to indicate interest in a person would be to suggest that you *get together (sometime) (for dinner, a movie, etc.)*. Lots of people can *get together* in a *get-together* [gathering, party, meeting]
- ✧ *get together {with someone} {on something}* [agree]
 The same phrase with one little bitty addition suddenly implies a ‘meeting of minds.’ For instance, you and a seller might *get together on a purchase price*.
- ✧ *get up with someone* [contact]
 My understanding is that you usually have some purpose and/or have to make an effort to contact the person. Very often you aren’t able.

**19. GET (SOMETHING) SOMEHOW(ADJUNCT) =
 GET SOMEHOW(ADJUNCT) (SOMETHING)
 [(specific to adjunct)]**

Here comes another bunch of monkeys:

- ✧ *get (something) across/over/through (to someone) =
 get across/over/through (something) (to someone)*
 The intransitive means [be understood], and thus the transitive means [convey, communicate]. All three adjuncts lead to the same basic meaning, but

‘through’ means that you probably have to try a lot harder. Usually you’ll *get a point, argument, etc., across/over/through (to someone)*.

Note that you’ll *get a point across*, but *get across the point that something or other*. In other words, the simple SOMETHINGS generally come first, and the complicated second. Of course, all of these expressions apparently relate to good old Phrase 4, *get someone/something [understand, comprehend]*.

⊛ *get (something) ahead = get ahead (something)*

With the intransitive meaning [**advance, improve one’s situation**], (which we saw in Phrase 17), the transitive logically means [**save, accumulate**]. You might *get a few bucks ahead = get ahead a few bucks*. I guess you might also *get time (hours, minutes, etc.) ahead (of schedule) = get ahead an hour*, or even *get some distance (miles, inches, etc.) ahead (of plan) = get ahead a mile*, which both add an element of [**exceed**].

⊛ *get (something) by = get by (something)*

As remarked earlier in Phrase 17, the intransitive meaning [**manage, survive**] implies *getting along* with difficulty. Meanwhile the transitive means [**store up, put by**], as in *getting some pickles by* or *getting by some pickles*.

Weren’t these three amusing little monkeys so cute and orderly? As far as monkeys go, that is. However, just around the next bend in the jungle path, we’re about to meet up with their much bigger uncles.

CHAPTER 6 – GET A MOVE ON!*

As your safari leader, I'm naturally concerned about your comfort and safety here in the grammar jungle, and so I've got to warn you that when our wild verb plays in bigger phrases with both adjuncts and nouns, it gets even friskier. These larger phrases really are the monkeys' uncles**—veritable chimpanzees, and just about as naughty. Swinging around in the adjunct vines, they drop definitions all over the place. And what's more, as a general rule, the word order is reversible!

20. GET (SOMEONE/SOMETHING) SOMEHOW_(ADJUNCT) = GET SOMEHOW_(ADJUNCT) (SOMEONE/SOMETHING) [(*specific to adjunct*)]

When we add SOMEONE or SOMETHING as an object, watch how much the meaning depends entirely on the adjunct—and of course on the context.

☛ *get someone off* = *get off someone* [aggravate, irritate]

Perhaps it's just the dialect of my rural childhood, but I've heard 'get' used in this phrase with this meaning. Though it's not very frequent, most people would understand that mowing the lawn in the early morning just might *get off the neighbors* or *get the neighbors off*.

Truth be told, we've already seen an intransitive version of this in Phrase 18: *get off {with someone}* [achieve orgasm]. And working backwards from that, the transitive *get someone off* [cause orgasm] cannot be reversed.

☛ *get someone/something together* = *get together someone/something* [gather, assemble]

This time the phrase is very common. You can *get the relatives together* for the holidays, *get together a collection*, or *get the toaster (back) together*. One might argue that some of this might just be 'get' as a replacement for 'put' (Phrase 3), but it doesn't really matter. We often have to tell people to *get it together!* or in other words, "Organize your life!" Again, this time the intransitive phrase has almost the same meaning: *get together {with someone}* [meet, assemble].

☛ *get (someone) up* = *get up (someone)* [awaken, arise]

Get up may well be one of the most familiar 'get' expressions of all. Everybody eventually *gets up in the morning*, or even later. Not only people, but a few SOMETHINGS can metaphorically *get up*: the wind, rain, sea, etc.

* [Start moving!]

** "I'll be a monkey's uncle!" is an idiom of incredulity, disbelief.

In the transitive usage, parents often have a hard time *getting up all the kids* in time for school, meaning [**awaken, rouse**]. Small wonder that the phrase lends itself to the sexual context: Hopefully, it isn't too difficult to *get someone up* [**cause to have an erection**].

✳ *get (someone) up = get up (someone)* [**arrange a costume, disguise**]

I realize that this looks rather like the preceding phrase, but the new meaning becomes clear if you *get (someone) up (as someone/something)*, such as a pirate, witch, or whatever. This leads to the noun, a *getup* [**costume, disguise**].

21. GET SOMETHING SOMEHOW_(ADJUNCT) = GET SOMEHOW_(ADJUNCT) SOMETHING [(*specific to adjunct*)]

When 'get' teams up with an adjunct and a SOMETHING as a required object, perhaps you might call them the monkeys' aunts—more chimpanzees that make even more meaningful faces than the uncles did.

✳ *get something down = get down something*

The word 'down' is a slippery one. We've already seen it used as an adjective (Phrase 14) and as a plain adjunct (Phrase 18 and here), and it will pop up again in the next chapter as a directional adverb. Forget about that for the moment and concentrate on this phrase. The meanings of the phrase come from the nature of the SOMETHING. For instance, if you *get down the main points* of a lecture, it means [**write down, record**]. If you *get an agreement down* (on paper), it shifts a little to mean [**record, preserve**]. And then again, if you *get the dance steps down*, it means [**learn**], perhaps in the sense of 'preserve in memory.'

✳ *get something in = get in something*

This little phrase operates with three different types of SOMETHINGs with as many different shades of meaning. First, there's the verbal or physical "attack" mode: If you *get in a dig, hit, jab, kick, poke, punch etc.*, it's going to be 'at someone' and in spite of their defenses or opposition. Here the phrase seems to mean 'successfully dig, hit, jab, etc.,' but it's probably better to generalize and say that the phrase means [**interject**]. Then there's the usage involving information: Around talkative people it can be pretty hard to *get a word in edgewise* [**insert**]. And third case is the inclusion of an activity in a schedule, such as *get in an hour's exercise, a little nap, a mile of jogging, etc.* [**include**]. Of course, all of these examples are just as correct with the inverted word order: *get a dig in, get in a word edgewise, and get a little nap in.*

⊛ *get something off* = *get off something*

Unlike the previous phrase, this one operates in only two contexts, and the meanings are entirely unrelated. First, if you *get off a joke, trick, etc., (on someone)*, it means [**perpetrate, play**].

Similarly you might also *get something by someone* or *get something past someone*, such as a ‘mistake, lie, etc. [**elude, outwit**]. Clearly these are unique phrases because there is a ⇔ relationship with the reverse word order (a change in the grammatical structure): *get by/past something on someone*.

The second context is when the SOMETHING is an item of clothing. Often you will *get off your coat, hat, shoes, etc.*, as well as *get them off* [**undress, take off clothing**]. Some might argue that this is a “replacement” use of ‘get’ for the verb ‘take,’ (which also allows the reversible word order), but I don’t think so. Let’s come back to this argument after the next phrase.

⊛ *get something on* = *get on something* [dress, put on clothing]

Even in alphabetical order, we come immediately to the exact opposite of the preceding phrase. You would also *get on your coat, hat, shoes, etc.* or *get them on*. In the same way as before, this ‘get’ might be called a replacement for the verb ‘put,’ (which again does the reversal trick). But it’s not either.

The fact is, in both these phrases ‘get’ means something substantially different than those other verbs. Namely, if you ‘take your coat off,’ it’s basically a process; if you *get your coat off*, it definitely implies the completion of that process. Same thing holds for ‘putting’ or *getting your coat on*.

I’m sure this distinction doesn’t sound terribly profound, but it really does pervade most of the meanings of ‘get’ phrases we’ve seen so far, and will be even more evident in chapters to come. In general, the definitions given so far have been the “processes,” and the ‘get’ phrases are those processes completed. I’ve brought it up at this point because in these two phrases, the “perfective”^{*} nature of the verb ‘get’ is particularly obvious. There’s no “replacement” involved. We’ll return to this distinction later on.

⊛ *get something out* = *get out something* [produce, complete]

This phrase always seems to deal with some kind of work. For instance, people struggle to *get out an assignment, book, job, newsletter, product, word, etc.* (I know how tempting it is to think of other ways to ‘get something out,’ but don’t. We’ll run into those phrases soon enough and they mean something different.) Meanwhile, I’ve always found it curious that when you *get something out*, the passive construction is either what you’d expect, *something is gotten out*, or an oddly active-looking construction, *something gets out* [**be produced, completed**].

* “Perfective” is a type of verb in Russian which also expresses the completion of an action, much like the “aorist” verb forms in classical Greek.

- ✧ *get something up = get up something* [arrange, organize]
 Most of the time, you'll *get up a game (of bridge), meal, meeting, party, plan, etc.* It makes perfectly fine sense to *get a game up, party up, etc.* but I haven't heard this sequence very frequently.

22. GET SOMETHING SOMEHOW(ADJUNCT) [("frozen" expressions)]

When 'get' hooks up with SOMETHING and an adjunct so tightly that the word order is irreversible, I call it a "frozen" expression. If you will, they're the monkeys' cousins once removed—perhaps they're baboons. Some of them can get pretty vulgar, if not obscene, so you might not wish to read the "The Dirty Ones" section. Remember, you can't reverse the word order in these expressions.

THE (Mostly) CLEAN ONES:

- ✧ *get a buzz on* [become intoxicated]
 A 'buzz' is the traditional word for the effect of alcohol or the intoxicant of choice. Without doubt, the drinking classes of each generation find their own expressions – I seem to recall once hearing *get a high on*. But 'buzz' is the one that endures.
- ✧ *get it on {for someone}* [applaud]
 In the past decade or so this has become the usual encouragement to an audience to welcome a (rock) performer to the stage.
- ✧ *get a leg up (on {doing} something)* [do part of task early]
 It's frustrating trying to define this expression. While it has to do with 'preparing,' the best definition is really [get a head start]. Another expression which means the same is *get a jump on {doing} something*.
- ✧ *get a load off* [relax]
 It's implied that the 'load' is to be 'gotten' off the feet, which is accomplished by sitting down and results in relaxation. (If it's not the feet, then this expression immediately reverts to the off-color and means [ejaculate].)
- ✧ *get a move on* [hurry up]
 You'd think something as direct as this expression would allow for other words besides 'move,' but no. There's still another way to say the same thing:

✳ *get the lead out* [hurry up]

Because of a usually unmentionable assumption about where the ‘lead’ is to be ‘gotten out of,’ this figurative expression actually belongs to a different ‘get’ phrase. But doesn’t it fit rather well into this list?

THE DIRTY ONES:

✳ *get it on (with someone)* [be sexually active]

Used in the command form, (*Get it on!*) this phrase doesn’t necessarily mean sexual activity, but it definitely implies some form of extreme enjoyment or performance.

✳ *get it off* [achieve orgasm]

Obviously this phrase with the indefinable ‘it’ is very like *get off (with someone)* [achieve orgasm] (Phrase 18), but it doesn’t seem to require anybody else in the vicinity.

IDIOM ALERT! *get one’s rocks off* [achieve orgasm]

Example: Jane: I’ve had it! Men are such pigs!
Jill: That’s right! All they want to do is get their rocks off and then go watch football!

I’m not certain if women have rocks and have never heard this applied to one. Perhaps they have their own “colorful” idiom.

✳ *get it up* [achieve an erection]

Other ways for a male to become sexually excited are to *get a hard on* or *a bone on*. (A shred of decency forbids me to mention the equally graphic female equivalent which I have indeed heard more than once.)

There! That’s all. Was it too smutty for you? Perhaps we should hack our way out of these adjunct vines, find a nice open spot in the woods, and take a break. Care to grab some lunch? You’ll need your strength for the next stop on our safari.

CHAPTER 7 – YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE!*

I hope you are now well fortified and ready for what's next. Let's carefully wade across this stream full of ravenous conjunctions. Now we've come to the absolutely giant SOMEWHERE tree with a zillion branches and draped all over in adjunct vines. This is a place our wild verb frequently hangs out.

First, I need to remind you about how SOMEWHERE can be a location (place), as in Phrase 12: *get something {at} somewhere* [**obtain**]. Well, of course, with the appropriate prepositions, SOMEWHERE can also be a direction. But the really important thing for understanding SOMEWHERE is that besides being a place, (like a 'field'), it can be a person or thing, as long as they're considered a point of reference rather than an object. For instance, 'beside George' is SOMEWHERE (place). So is 'on the table' (place), but 'onto the table' is a SOMEWHERE (direction). It's this direction that produces our next prime phrase.

23. GET {TO/FROM} SOMEWHERE [go, move (*intransitive*)]

Right away I've got to qualify the meaning of this phrase. The action of going can easily turn into that of coming, depending simply on your point of view. 'To go' is 'to move away' from you/here, and 'to come' is 'to move toward' you/here. Though it sounds silly, perhaps a better definition would be [**go/come, move**].

And there's another really important thing: Used like this to express motion, our wild verb is very obviously "perfective." That is, it denotes completion of the activity. If you *go/come home*, you undertake the process of going/coming in that direction; but if you *get home*, you arrive at that destination. This "completeness" of action also brings with it a sense of succeeding or managing to perform the activity, perhaps in spite of obstacles. So an even more complete definition would probably be [**move successfully**].

A curiosity about this 'get' phrase is that the present progressive tense can also mean future action. To say that you *'re getting home at five o'clock* can mean either that you regularly arrive at that time (present tense)—or that you will be arriving at that time (future tense).** The future progressive tense, that you *'ll be getting home*, seems just to be more words for the same thing.

The reason I used 'home' in the above examples is because it's a very special type of SOMEWHERE. While you can say 'to or at somewhere,' you'd never go 'to home' since 'home' is a direction. If you intend 'home' as a location, you say either

* This is a joke, an absurd proposition, unless 'there' is somewhere like Alpha Centauri.

** As a former Slavic linguist, I can't resist noting that in Russian the present form of perfective verbs also denotes future tense.

‘home’ or ‘at home.’ On the other hand, though you can *get here* or *get there* as directions, you can also *get to here* or *get to there*. But you’d never be ‘at here’ or ‘at there’ since these words are already locations. Clear as mud? Also, here’s the best place to remark on the metaphorical meaning of *get there* [**succeed**].

It’s when you *get from one place to another*, when notions of coming and going don’t matter, that the meaning [**move**] becomes more obvious. Notice that ‘get’ implies absolutely nothing about the means of movement. The context must dictate whether it is actually [**walk**], [**run**], [**ride**], [**drive**], [**fly**] or whatever. Also, note that a SOMETHING may also *get to/from somewhere*, like when *the train gets to Chicago*.

24. GET SOMEHOW(ADJUNCT) {SOMEWHERE} [**move (intransitive)**]

When the adjuncts jump into the mix, the SOMEWHERE tree literally starts crawling with phrases, far more than a barrel full of monkeys. Make that a boxcar full. And every one of the little buggers just makes the meaning of completed motion more specific. In this phrase SOMEWHERE can be either location or direction, depending on the adjunct. I’ll simply list them again alphabetically and remark only on those that may have a more focused meaning or that generate other expressions, which is most of them. If no other definition is given, in these phrases ‘get’ still generally means [**move**] with the specifications of the adjunct.

Brace yourself. This will take quite a while.

✦ *get about {somewhere}* [**walk**]

The phrase with ‘about’ implies very basic locomotion. A person who has to use a walker or wheelchair would probably just be *getting about*. You don’t really have to say where because it’s probably limited, like ‘(in) the house.’

✦ *get above somewhere*

As I mentioned under Phrase 23, the verb ‘get’ doesn’t specify the mode of motion. Here ‘get’ could mean [**fly**], [**climb**], or whatever the context dictates.

✦ *get across somewhere {to/from somewhere}*

For instance, you could *get across the desert (from one oasis to another)*.

✦ *get along {to/from somewhere}* [**continue moving**]

When it’s time to go, a good casual way to prepare to leave is to say that you’d better be *getting along home*. As cowboys know, animals can *get along* too, like the cattle in: “Get Along, Little Dogies” (title of western folk song). A very casual or gently encouraging way to say the same thing is *get on along*.

✧ *get around {somewhere}* [circulate]

In this phrase the motion is more general than *get about* and in a larger location. Nowadays the principal mode of *getting around town* is the automobile. Some people *get around* on bicycles, and very few on foot anymore. As well, SOMETHINGS can also *get around*, like news, rumors, etc., and it can be metaphorical as in *get around in a subject* [**be familiar with**].

✧ *get around somewhere {to/from somewhere}* [circumvent]

This works very much like *get across*. You can *get around an obstacle* on your way to or from somewhere. When it involves a direction, *get around* can also imply a regular route, like when the meter reader *gets around to my house at the end of the month*.

✧ *get away {to/from somewhere}* [escape, take a vacation]

The two meanings are simply two different attitudes toward *getting away*. If you're escaping from something, you 'make a *getaway*' [**escape** (*n.*)], possibly in a *getaway* car [**escape** (*adj.*)]. On the other hand, you might simply *get away from it all* and take off for a *getaway* [**vacation**] at the beach. Sometimes a SOMETHING can do it too, like when *the time gets away from you*.

✧ *get back {to/from somewhere}* [return]

The adjunct 'back' used with a direction results in a very specific meaning for the phrase. You could also *get back in(to)/out of somewhere* with the same meaning of returning to a place. Most frequently, people will simply *get back* [**return**], but that's rather ambiguous. It can also mean [**back away, step back**] from somewhere.

✧ *get behind {somewhere}*

Clearly, you can easily move to a place behind a person or a thing. However, when the phrase is used figuratively, *get behind someone/something* means [**support, believe in**].

✧ *get before/below/beneath/beside/between/beyond somewhere*

Here's a whole bunch more "be-words" that simply direct the motion.

✧ *get by {somewhere}*

In its meaning of motion, this phrase could just as well be *get past somewhere*. When it is used figuratively, *get by someone/something* means [**evade, avoid**].

✧ *get close {to somewhere}* [approach, draw near]

The adjunct 'close' is very like 'near,' but probably more frequent. 'Close' mostly has to do with motion/direction, and 'near' seems to be more about location.

✧ *get down {somewhere}* [descend]

Here you can specify several directions in addition to ‘down,’ starting with simply *getting down a hill*, to *getting down to/from somewhere* or *getting down in(to)/on(to)/off (of) somewhere*.

✧ *get in{to somewhere}* [enter]

That sounds reasonable for *getting into a room, concert, etc.* But then we find that you can *get in (to/from somewhere)*, and this suddenly means [arrive]. In addition, you can also *get in back of/in between/in front of/inside (of)/under(neath of)somewhere*, and those prepositions carry their own directions.

✧ *get off {(of) somewhere}*

Watch out for context! You might *get off (of) a horse*, meaning [dismount], or *get off (of) the lawn*, meaning [leave, move off], or *get off a ship* meaning [disembark] or just about anything in between.

✧ *get off {to/from somewhere}* [depart]

One usually *gets off* on a trip of some sort.

✧ *get on {(to) somewhere}*

Again, you can *get on a horse*, meaning [mount] or *get on a bus* meaning [board]. Of course, if you *get on top (of) somewhere*, then it clearly means [move on top of]. Now consider when SOMETHING *gets on(to) somewhere*, like when mud *gets on the carpet*. Here it means [spot, stain]. Good housekeepers will usually claim that the mud *gets all over the carpet*.

✧ *get on to/from somewhere* [continue moving, proceed]

People often *get on* the ‘way’ to or from somewhere, and a comment that you’d better be *getting on home* is a polite way of saying [leave].

✧ *get out {of somewhere}* [exit, leave]

Here the broad definition allows for a great many contextual meanings. To *get out of jail* could mean [escape] or [be let out, released]. If you *get out of the room*, you may simply [leave] or [flee], and if you *get out of the house*, you might just [go outside] or *get out to the movies, dinner, etc.* [go on an outing]. There are many other shades of meaning to be found in frequent expressions like *get out of bed, a chair, etc.* [arise], *get out of my/the way, street, etc.* [make way], *get out of an apartment, office, etc.* [vacate, move out], *get out of class, a meeting, etc.* [conclude, leave off]. In the broad sense of [exit, leave] you can *get out of a car, window, town, relationship*, or whatever.

Once again, notice that ‘get’ says nothing about the mode of making an exit: *get out of a hole* could mean [climb], [be pulled], or even figuratively [overcome a

difficulty]. Then there are usages with ‘from’ as in *get out from the wall* meaning [**move away**] or *get out from under the bed, porch, etc.* [**move, come**]. And last but not least is the very specific *get outside of somewhere* [**evacuate**].

I should also point out that SOMETHINGS can also *get out*, like ‘news,’ a ‘secret,’ or a ‘magazine,’ etc. Then it means [**be published, made public**]. You might recall the similar expression from Phrase 21: *get something out* ⇔ *something gets out* [**be produced, completed**]

This is also the phrase underlying that very first meaningful example of our verb in the Introduction. The command *Get!* [**Leave! Go away! Shoo! Scat!**] is elliptical for *get out (of here)* and the source of that first idiom *Get out (of here)!* [**disbelief**]. I should also pass on a wise warning I’ve heard about the stock market or other dubious undertakings: *to get out while the getting’s good*.

✧ *get over* {(to/from) somewhere}

Here we have a very straightforward expression in which the adjunct merely modifies the motion. You can *get over a bridge, log, obstacle, etc.*, moving from one place to another. However, if someone wonders when you’ll *get over to their place*, it means [**visit, drop in**]. Meanwhile, people may tell you to *get (on) over here/there* or *get over by the door*, meaning [**come/go**], with ‘over’ and ‘on’ simply adding a certain emphasis.

✧ *get through* {(to/from) somewhere} [**make one’s way**]

Physically you might *get through the bushes, swamp, etc.*, [**penetrate, cross**] or on a more abstract level you could *get through a book, concert, or experience* [**survive**]. Generally SOMEWHEREs are *gotten through* with difficulty.

✧ *get up* {(to/from) somewhere} [**arise, ascend**]

The simplest sort of expression is *get up a hill, ladder, etc.* meaning [**climb**], and then you can *get up on(to) a chair, table, etc.*, meaning [**move**]. (Note that once you’ve *gotten up onto the table*, then you’re either standing or sitting ‘on’ or ‘upon’ the table.) If you *get up from a chair, table, etc.*, it means [**stand up**]. With even more prepositions, you can *get up out of somewhere* or *get up into somewhere* with the general meaning of [**arise**], but *get up against somewhere* suddenly means [**stand, position oneself**].

The many-hyphenated noun *get-up-and-go* [**vigor, vitality**] reminds me of a funny remark I’ve heard more than once: “My get-up-and-go just got up and went!” That’s rather appropriate right now because Phrase 24 has really been a long haul.

At this point you might want to catch your breath while I remark on what still lies ahead—namely more of the same! Both Phrases 23 and 24 can also be made transitive with an object. In this chapter I’ve had to somewhat artificially separate

one gigantic SOMEWHERE phrase into a number of components, but there wasn't much choice. While perhaps more accurate, the complete phrase expression would've been ludicrous, a perfect algebra of parentheses, slashes, brackets, and even equal signs. That's right. They're back! Once again we're going to see reversible word orders. If you're ready for it, maybe now we can go around to the other side of the SOMEWHERE tree for another view of its 'get' phrases.

25. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING {TO/FROM} SOMEWHERE
[move (*transitive*), take, transport]

All the comments about Phrase 23 regarding 'coming' and 'going,' the verb's perfective (completed) aspect, and so on, still hold for this transitive phrase, which is just as uncomplicated as the intransitive one. A few examples would be to *get the kids to school*, *get a rock from the pile*, or *get a piano home*. Notice that the mode of transport is still not specified.

Just to be literary, I'll point out a rather Shakespearean expression: *Get thee to a nunnery!* [**go**]. This archaic command is a reflexive, on a par with the more contemporary *Get yourself over here!* [**come**].

26 A. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING SOMEHOW(ADJUNCT)
{SOMEWHERE}
[move (*transitive*), take, transport]

This is just one piece, let's call it **PART A**, of the "master" phrase, and it looks fairly simple. Anyway, here comes the list. Let's try and consolidate it as much as reasonable. Notice how the transitive phrase refines the basic meaning.

✧ *get someone/something about/above/across/along/around somewhere*
 These are simply added directions of transportation.

✧ *get someone/something away (from somewhere)* [**remove, take away**]
 It might require force to *get something away from someone*.

✧ *get something back in(to)/on(to) somewhere* [**replace, put back in/on**]
 On the other hand if you *get someone back in(to)/on(to) somewhere*, there's a definite implication of either arranging for it, like *getting someone back into the club*, or convincing the SOMEONE to move, like *getting someone back onto the train*. (See the discussion of *getting someone/something in (to somewhere)* below.)

- ✧ *get someone/something back off (of)/out (of) somewhere* [**remove, take off/out**]
There's apparently no such distinction with these prepositions.

- ✧ *get someone/something back (to somewhere)* [**return, take back**]
Now we've got a case in which the preposition makes an enormous difference. As a matter of fact, if you *get someone/something back (from somewhere)*, it means the opposite: [**retake, regain**].

Now comes the real trouble. With some adjuncts, including 'back,' you can reverse the word order, thus adding a **PART B** to the phrase.

**26 B. = GET SOMEHOW(ADJUNCT) SOMEONE/SOMETHING
{SOMEWHERE}
[move (*transitive*), take, transport]**

- ✧ *get someone/something back {somewhere} =
get back someone /something {somewhere}*
Immediately this phrase is fatally ambiguous. There are two meanings that depend on whether it is 'to' or 'from' SOMEWHERE. If you *get a video back to the store* = *get back a video to the store*, it means [**return**], but if you *get a video back from a friend* = *get back a video from a friend*, it means [**regain, receive**], very like Phrase 10: *get something from someone* [**receive, obtain, steal, etc.**]. We'll see several other adjuncts that have a **PART B**, but they aren't usually ambiguous.

- ✧ *get someone/something behind/below/beneath/beside/between/beyond/by (past)/over (to/from) somewhere*
These adjuncts merely clarify the direction of moving/transporting.

- ✧ *get someone/something down {to/from somewhere}* [**take down**]
There are a lot of other combinations of prepositions to be more specific about the action: *get someone/something down in(to)/on(to)/off (of)/out (of) somewhere*, and **PART B** works here too. Thus, you can *get the box down (from the shelf)* = *get down the box (from the shelf)*.

If you *get someone/something down something*, like a flag down a flagpole, or a kid down a tree, the same meaning still holds, but if you *get something down someone*, like a pill, it rather logically means [**cause to swallow**]. Similarly, the **PART B** allows you to *get a big pill down* = *get down a big pill* [**swallow**].

✧ *get something in {to/from somewhere}*

The context of this statement is very important. For instance, if you *get the wash in (from the clothesline)* it means [**take, bring in**], but if a store *gets some corn in (from the farm)*, it means [**receive, obtain**]. Taken one step farther, the passive looks just like an active phrase: *get something in* [**bring in/receive, obtain**] ⇔ *something gets in* [**be brought in/received, obtained**].

On the next hand, if you *get someone/something in (to somewhere)*, it means [**arrange, convince, or cause to enter**] As mentioned before, this can be *getting someone into a club* or *getting a square peg into a round hole*.

On top of that, we've got to consider **PART B** because you can usually *get someone/something in = get in someone/something*, be it 'to' or 'from' wherever.

✧ *get someone/something in back of/(in) between/in front of/inside (of)/out(side) (of)/under(neath) of somewhere* [**place, position**]

Instead of directions, this bunch of prepositions specifies the place or position to which the SOMEONE or SOMETHING is moved/transported.

✧ *get someone/something off {to/from somewhere}* [**send, dispatch**]

For example, we often *get a letter off (to a friend)*, but you could also *get a messenger off (to somewhere)*. With the other direction, you would *get someone/something off (of/from) somewhere* [**remove, take off**], like *getting the lid off (a jar)*, *a spot off (your shirt)*. As you've probably suspected, 'off' is another adjunct with a **PART B**. Consequently, you can also *get off a letter, messenger, lid, spot, etc.*

An especially frequent 'off' expression is to *get time (a day, week, etc.) off = get off a day, week, etc.* Since 'from work' is implied, you'd think it would mean [**take**], but instead, it means [**receive**].

✧ *get someone/something {on(to)} somewhere* [**place, position**]

This is yet another expression of moving/transporting to a place or position, including *getting mud on the carpet*. Once again, a good housekeeper would probably exaggerate that you were *getting mud all over the carpet*.

✧ *get someone/something out {of/from somewhere}* [**extract, remove**]

This phrase is less vague than the intransitive one (p. 35) with its wide range of contextual meanings. Here, it means the same, whether you *get a pen out (of the drawer)* or *get the kid out (of the car)*. In addition, **PART B** comes into play again so you could also say, *get out a pen* or *get out the kid*.

✧ *get someone/something up {(to/from) somewhere}* [**raise, lift**]

Once again, if you *get someone/something up a hill*, there's no information about how you do it. Depending on the context, it could mean anything from

[**carry**] to [**chase**], or to be silly, even [**roll**]. The meanings are just as contextual if you *get someone/something up on somewhere*, but if you *get someone/something up against somewhere*, it means [**hold**] or [**push**].

An archaic command, *Get ye up!* (*Get yourself up!*) [**arise**] is why we often exhort horses: *Giddyup!* [**start moving, go faster**].

Well, congratulations, folks! You have now slogged the whole way around the humongous SOMEWHERE tree! No mean feat! Did you try counting all the amazing apes we saw this time? I didn't either. However, do try to become familiar with this tree-full of 'get' phrases if you want to get anywhere in spoken American English.

CHAPTER 8: *GETTING TO GET**

‘Get’ acts much less like a monkey, that is, more civilized, when it plays around with other verbs. Of course, there are no adjuncts involved. Its phrases in this case often express the ‘cause’ or ‘initiation’ of the other verb. But there’s a lot more to it than that, including our first verbal phrase:

27. GET TO DO SOMETHING [be allowed to, find it possible to]

The combination with the infinitive is about as straightforward as you can get, so much so that examples are almost superfluous. Basically you might *get to go to the party* or *get to eat oysters* or whatever you want.

Some frequent expressions seem to have slightly different, perhaps merely abstracted, meanings, such as *get to know someone/something* [**become acquainted with**] or *get to sleep* [**fall asleep**]. Notice, however, that *get to sleep* can also mean [**be allowed to sleep**]. Ah, sweet ambiguity! To *get to sleep late*, you either get to bed late or don’t get up early.

We should also recall Phrase 16: *get to be someone/something* [**become**]. Remember how someone can *get to be a bore*? Well, *get to be someone/something* can also belong to Phrase 27 meaning [**be allowed to, find it possible to**], as in *get to be President, Miss America, etc.* Maybe the two meanings aren’t really all that different, the former being just the process of becoming (starting to be), and the latter involving permission, be it specific or cosmic, to become (start to be).

28. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING TO DO SOMETHING [arrange for, persuade]

Like before, let’s separate out the transitive use with an object because it has a totally different meaning. Actually, it’s almost the inverse of Phrase 27 which involved obtaining “permission” TO DO SOMETHING. Here, instead, you provide the impetus or arrangement for SOMEONE or SOMETHING else to do it.

For example, you might try to *get grandpa to pick up the kids* or finally *get the stupid computer to work*. This is fun! Let’s *get him to shut up, her to go fly a kite, it to stop, and them to behave!* (Indeed, this is one of the keys to happiness: getting someone else to do it for you!**)

* [**being allowed to; arriving at**]

** Please forgive my parenthetical pseudo-philosophy. Playing all these word games with our wild verb seems to beget such silliness and a certain cynicism.

29. GET DONE(PARTICIPLE)
[be (passive auxiliary verb)]

Very often our wild verb hooks up with a participle as another way to make the passive voice. For example, if you're going to be fired from a job, you'll *get fired*. Once again, there is something definitely perfective (completed) in using 'get' for the passive auxiliary instead of 'be.' To 'be caught' is again simply the process, perhaps a continuing condition, but to *get caught* is the event itself—forgive my French, the *fait accompli*.

This kind of passive can be made with just about any participle you please: *get asked a question, bitten by a dog, cured of an illness, driven to distraction, shot in the foot*, or whatever. Curiously, the prototype phrase *get done* can also mean [**finish, complete**], but that is really from the larger phrase *get done* *{(with){doing} something}* which awaits us down the trail. Consider this a little foretaste of wonders still in store.

There are some common expressions that don't immediately look like participles, but they really are, like *get rid of something* [**dispose of**]. A more colloquial phrase for the same thing is *get shut of something* [**dispose of**]. Another thing that commonly happens is *getting used to someone/{doing} something* [**become accustomed to**].

Meanwhile, this passive phrase is closely related to Phrase 14: **GET (TO BE) SOMEHOW(ADJECTIVE) [become]**. The distinction between an adjective and a participle can often be hard to figure out. Take for example 'lost.' If SOMEONE *gets lost*, it's an adjective and 'get' means [**become**], but if SOMETHING *gets lost*, it's a participle and 'get' is the passive auxiliary [**be**]. There's even a dramatic example with an intransitive participle: *get gone* [**go away**].

30. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING DONE(PARTICIPLE)
[cause to be/successfully do]

When the phrase includes SOMEONE or SOMETHING as an object, context means a lot. When you *get someone elected, fired, murdered, etc.*, it's pretty clear that you're causing some third party to do it to the SOMEONE, but if you *get someone washed, fed, etc.*, you're probably the one who does it.

With SOMETHING as the object, as when you *get a package wrapped, the car fixed, etc.*, the phrase is thoroughly ambiguous. Knowing the agent of the action becomes crucial. For instance, if you *get the car fixed*, either you arrange for the car to be [**cause to be**] fixed by someone else, or you fix [**successfully do**] the car yourself (in that old perfective sense). Notice how the first case, *get the car fixed by someone*, can transform into Phrase 28: ⇔ *get someone to fix the car* [**arrange for, persuade**].

31. GET (TO) DOING SOMETHING

[start, begin]

The gerund DOING SOMETHING is a very important form of a verb. It's used to make the progressive tenses (as in 'I'm doing something. '), and also it's how you make a verb into a noun ('the doing of something'). Here we'll consider only the verbal (progressive) nature of the gerund. Some common examples are *get going* or *get moving*, less frequently *get to going* or *get to moving* with the same meaning. Another "naked" gerund can be found in the

IDIOM ALERT! *get cracking* [start seriously, energetically]

EXAMPLE: John: Hey! I've got a report due tomorrow!
Joe: Looks like you better get cracking!

On the other hand, most other gerunds seem to prefer to go with the preposition 'to,' or maybe it's the 'to' of the infinitive. Whatever. You'll usually *get to dancing*, *to thinking*, *to chopping wood*, etc., but without the preposition, it's somehow more urgent. For instance, you're supposed to *get to chopping wood*, and the boss urges, "Well then, *get chopping!*" (The phrase with 'to' has a great deal of overlap with another one we'll see in the next chapter.)

By the way, there's a silly little noun spun off from the expression *get going*, used mostly in the phrase (*at/from the*) *get-go* [start, beginning].

32. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING (TO) DOING SOMETHING

[cause to start, begin]

When you throw in an object, the meaning logically switches to being the cause. For instance, you might *get the car running* or *the baby crying*. Rather often we'd use the preposition 'to' before the gerund, as in *get the car to running* or *the baby to crying*. Or maybe it's the 'to' from the infinitive. Again, whatever. Like Phrase 31, this one also sounds a lot like one we'll see in the next chapter.

In addition, Phrase 32 is clearly related to Phrase 28: *get someone/something to do something* [arrange for, persuade], but there's a big difference in terms of immediacy. If you *get him (to) mowing the lawn*, you are causing the process of the lawn being mowed by him to start (fairly soon). Nothing is implied about how you'll manage to do that, other than that you'll be successful in doing so (that subtle perfective aspect again). However, when you *get him to mow the lawn*, it's a good bet you'll have to pay or otherwise coerce the lawn-mower, (and the time of the eventual mowing isn't at all clear).

If you happen to *get someone going* [excite], it usually has emotional, if not overtly sexual implications.

CHAPTER 9: *GETTING DOWN TO GET**

Now, folks, let's forge onward along our jungle trail to where the gerund works like a noun. I'll admit that I've saved the best for last. At this last stop on our safari, you'll meet the monkeys' granddaddy! It's truly awesome, a veritable eight-hundred-pound gorilla! Once again involving those mischievous adjuncts, most importantly, it includes a kind of word that we've up to this point fairly much ignored. I'm referring to the preposition. Being a lazy linguist and influenced by Internet e-speak, I'll call the prepositional phrase a PREPHRASE.

The PREPHRASE consists of a preposition and its object, which can be either SOMEONE, SOMETHING, or the gerund DOING SOMETHING (as a noun). Earlier we encountered a few very specific prephrases such as 'with someone' or 'by something' and the phrases of location or direction, like 'at/from/to somewhere.' But now we're talking about the full-blown PREPHRASE:

PREPHRASE = PREPOSITION + SOMEONE/{DOING} SOMETHING.

That's why it was important first to become familiar with the gerund in its other form. Now that it's a noun, there's a whole new world of meanings for 'get.'

The insidious thing is that for the most part prepositions look just like adjuncts. So the fact that the next phrase sometimes also contains an adjunct can lead to those multiple prepositions I talked about in that bothersome Interruption.

With no further ado, I give you the following prime phrase of 'get:'

33. GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW_(ADJUNCT)} PREPHRASE [*(specific to preposition)*]

Yes, indeed! This time the meaning of the expression now depends not so much on the adjunct as on the specific preposition used. There is little choice but to proceed alphabetically by preposition or (adjunct) + preposition. And I've got to ask you to settle in for another long haul, as a matter of fact, a very long one! You're free to count. I won't.

✪ *get about {doing} something*

[**begin casually**]

Our first expression from this phrase, like several to follow, uses only the basic structure. When you need to do something and find yourself with time on your hands, you might *get about doing it*. In a similarly un-pressured situation, you might *get someone about {doing} something* [**cause to begin casually**], but the casual overtones don't work well with the pressure of 'causing.'

* [**devote serious attention to**]

✧ *get after {doing} something* [begin with haste]

In another very basic expression, the preposition ‘after’ brings a certain degree of haste or urgency. Quite reasonably you would *get someone after {doing} something* [cause to begin with haste], especially if you happen to be boss.

✧ *get against someone/{doing} something* [oppose]

The preposition ‘against’ produces a meaning directly connected to its own. The transitive expression, *get someone against someone/{doing} something* [cause to oppose] sounds somewhat awkward, but it makes relatively good sense. On the other hand, people often *get something against someone/{doing} something* [develop a grudge, begin to dislike].

✧ *get ahead in/on {doing} something* [advance]

Two prepositions are possible, and oddly there’s little difference in the meanings of their expressions. You could *get ahead in/on doing your homework, washing the dishes, etc.* In Phrase 22 (Clean Ones), we’ve already seen the expressions, *get a leg up (on {doing} something)*, and *get a jump on {doing} something* with a related meaning [get a head start].

✧ *get around someone/{doing} something* [avoid, circumvent]

This PREPHRASE is what most people constantly try to do, especially to *get around* an authority figure, but often there’s no *getting around* some hard fact or odious task. If you’re feeling altruistic, you might trouble yourself to *get someone around {doing} something* [cause to avoid].

✧ *get around to someone/{doing} something* [find time for (casual)]

Now we’re looking at the adjunct ‘around’ with a PREPHRASE. Notice how the preposition ‘to’ almost reverses the meaning of the preceding expression. A doctor might eventually *get around to {seeing} a patient* or you could *get around to {writing} a letter*. I suppose it might make sense to *get someone around to {doing} something*, but only if you’re the one in charge and in no particular hurry.

✧ *get at {doing} something* [address oneself to]

The preposition ‘at’ brings a sense of choosing to do it now, not to hesitate any longer. Students have to *get at {doing} an assignment*. If a boss *gets someone at {writing} a report*, it’s a priority project and means, of course [cause to address].

✧ *get away from {doing} something* [stop gradually]

Now we’re dealing with the adjunct ‘away’ and a ‘from’ PREPHRASE. For instance, you could *get away from {drinking} milk, {watching} TV, etc.* It might be quite hard to *get someone away from {doing} something*, but if you could, it would mean [distract, cause to stop].

- ✧ *get away with {doing} something* [achieve without consequence or responsibility, surreptitiously]

Simply change the preposition, and there's a whole new complicated meaning. You might *get away with {making} a mistake, not brushing your teeth, etc.* It seems to imply something you shouldn't do. Of course this expression is related to the familiar *get away (from/to somewhere)* [escape].

- ✧ *get back to {doing} something* [start again, resume]

This can mean starting again at something one used to do as a habit, such as *get back to drinking*, or resuming an interrupted task, like *get back to the homework*. Understandably, with proper inducements you could *get someone back to {doing} something*, meaning [cause to start again, resume].

- ✧ *get behind someone/{doing} something* [support, encourage]

Now it's a PREPHRASE that also works with SOMEONE! There'll be more of this sort later, so don't be too surprised. The meaning of the transitive expression *get someone behind someone/{doing} something* is predictably [recruit, enlist].

- ✧ *get behind in/with {doing} something* [fall behind, lag]

So when we turn 'behind' into an adjunct and pop in some other prepositions, what do we get? A whole new meaning. God forbid that you should *get behind in {paying} your bills* or *feeding your pets*. And we'd never want to *get someone behind in/with their obligations* [cause to fall behind, obstruct].

- ✧ *get by (with) {doing} something* [achieve barely]

That earlier expression from Phrases 17 & 19, *get by* [manage, survive] lies beneath this expression. You may hope to *get by with doing no work* or *get by with doing a minimum*. There's no hint here of excellence.

- ✧ *get done {(with) {doing} something}* [finish, conclude]

Okay, I understand that 'done' is not an adjunct. But if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, I don't think it's a participle. We've already dealt with the passive *getting done* under Phrase 29. Here 'done' is somehow more like a SOMEHOW ('done' vs. 'undone'), and this way to say completing an action is one of the most frequent 'get' expressions you'll hear. They always want to know when you'll *get done with the job*. You can of course also *get done with someone*.

- ✧ *get down on someone/{doing} something* [lose interest in, dislike]

There's some genetic connection between this and the Phrase 14 expression, *get {to be} down* [become depressed]. Just being that way could also *get someone down on someone/{doing} something* [cause to lose interest in, dislike].

✧ *get down to {doing} something* [devote serious attention, effort]

Once again a different preposition brings essentially the opposite meaning, or at least one dramatically different. A common expression is to *get down to business*, but you could easily *get down to fishing, reading the newspaper, etc.* *Get down to brass tacks* [**focus on basics**] is an almost worth an idiom alert. There must be some logic to the tacks somewhere, but as for the brass part, I won't even hazard a guess.

✧ *get in on {doing} something* [participate, be included]

People usually *get in on {doing} something* that's fun, like 'going dancing' or 'playing a game' and it's always nice to *get someone in on it* [**include**] too.

✧ *get into someone/{doing} something* [become involved/interested]

You may well really *get into {reading} a book, {playing} hockey, etc.*, and you'll recall several common expressions from Phrase 14: *get in(to) trouble; get into a fix, mess, pickle, deep doo-doo, etc.* which mean [**become involved in (experiential) difficulty**] to the said degree of discomfort. (Perhaps for a philosophical reason, you only hear about folks 'keeping out of trouble' but never about them *getting out of trouble*. However, you could very well *get out of a fix, mess, etc.*) Of course, you can always *get someone into {playing} hockey* [**stimulate involvement/interest**], and to *get someone in(to) trouble, into a fix, mess, etc.* (Phrase 15), consequently means [**cause to experience difficulty**] to that degree.

✧ *get off on someone/{doing} something* [enjoy, take pleasure in]

You may recall a related expression from Phrase 18, *get off {with someone}* [**achieve orgasm**]. It's quite possible to *get off on {eating} chocolate, playing video games, etc.* without going to such lengths, but impossible to do that to someone else. (Without the PREPHRASE, you can make it transitive: *get someone off*, which generally means [**cause orgasm**] and all that activity entails.)

✧ *get off with {doing} something* [merely have to]

Let's say you're assigned three tasks, but you *get off with {doing} only two*. Perhaps you could have gotten ten years for a crime but *get off with only two*. Lawyers frequently *get someone off with {doing} something* [**arrange for limits**].

✧ *get off off/from {doing} something* [finish intentionally]

Many people find they need to *get off (of) smoking, eating sweets, etc.* The phrase with 'from' is probably from the dialect of my southern youth, you'll probably never have need of it. Consequently, the transitive *get someone off (of) {doing} something* means [**cause to stop**], implying perhaps extraordinary measures.

We often have occasion to tell someone *Get off it!* [**Stop doing that, being that way!**]. However, this is a very forceful, if not rude, expression.

Strangely, *get off doing something* (without the prepositions, parentheses and brackets) means something like **[have the audacity to do]**. Usually you'll hear it in a question like *Where does he get off doing that?* Then there's a third usage which almost everyone has to deal with. At some scheduled time people *get off (work)* or *get off (off/from) work* **[stop working]**. And we all want to *get some time, days, etc., off (off/from) work* **[receive vacation time]**.

I don't know about you, but after sorting through this crowd of expressions thus far, I think we all deserve a break to get it together for a moment. Because we're actually on the home-stretch! There's not all that many more Phrase 33 expressions left. Sorry that this next bunch with 'on' is almost maddeningly complicated. Observe:

⊛ *get on about someone/{doing} something* **[talk at length]**

People who travel have a way of *getting on about their trips*. (You're free to say that I've been *getting on about get!*) The implication is that the audience is possibly getting bored, or at least disengaged.

⊛ *get on(to) {doing} something* **[begin with force, soon]**

Generally you'd *get on(to) {doing} an assignment, task, etc.* It's not unlike *getting after {doing} something* **[begin with haste]**. If a need arises at work, an enthusiastic employee might volunteer to *get on it right away*. Rather than using 'after,' it's more likely you'd *get someone on(to) {doing} something* **[cause to begin soon, assign, order]**.

⊛ *get on to someone/{doing} something* **[find time for (in course of events)]**

Now you've got to remember that this is all about the spoken language. There's a very subtle difference in the pronunciation of this and the preceding expression. A tiny pause between 'on' and 'to' and a bit more emphasis on the 'to' once again produce a very different, almost opposite, meaning. After sweeping the floor, you might *get on to {washing} the clothes*.

⊛ *get **on** to someone/{doing} something* **[discover]**

Now the meaning comes from yet another difference in pronunciation. The bolded '**on**' indicates an added stress or emphasis on this word. If you *get **on** to someone*, you've found out a secret of some sort. To *get **on** to {doing} something* would be to find out about an activity. Of course, you might *get someone **on** to someone/{doing} something* **[expose to, stimulate interest in]**. Keep in mind that this expression is very different than the Phrase 7 expression *get **on(to)** someone (for {doing} something)* **[punish, reprimand]**.

- ✧ *get on top of {doing} something* [gain control of/over]
 Ah, at last a simple one! This is the result of the compound preposition ‘on top of,’ and might well be connected in concept with Phrase 23 *get (to/from) somewhere* [go, move (*intransitive*)]. Generally a person would *get on top of {doing} a job, task, etc.*
- ✧ *get on with {doing} something* [proceed, continue]
 Another preposition, another meaning. Now we find what underlies the classic show-business expression *Get on with the show!* Meanwhile you can *get on with {doing} whatever you want*, as long as it’s legal.
- ✧ *get out of {doing} something* [avoid, escape from]
 You’d expect there to be a lot of action with ‘out,’ but not so. Just this one, like *get out of {paying} a debt*. Frequent expressions are *get out of {abiding by} an agreement, lease, etc.* [be let out of, released from]. If you’re lucky, you can *get out of* just about anything except ‘death’ and ‘taxes.’ It’s usually much appreciated if you can *get someone out of {doing} something* [cause to avoid, escape from].
- ✧ *get over someone/{doing} something* [recover from]
 Disappointed lovers usually take a lot of time to *get over someone*, or anybody can have trouble *getting over {having} an accident*. If you *can’t get over someone/something*, the meaning extends to [be surprised at]. Still no matter how hard you try, sometimes you won’t be able to *get someone over someone/{doing} something* [cause to recover from].
- ✧ *get over (with) {doing} something = get {doing} something over (with)* [finish as a matter of course]
 Here’s another little word-order flip-flop. Most of the time you *get over with {doing} a chore, task, etc.*, or *get a chore over with*, and you’re probably impatient to *get it over (with)*. This also means that *something gets over (with)* [conclude, finish], like a performance or class.
- ✧ *get through (with) someone/{doing} something* [finish with some urgency]
 Very like the preceding expression, but different – and not reversible. You would probably be in a hurry to *get through with {doing} the laundry, etc.* Likewise, you might be impatient for SOMETHING, like a poor performance, to *get through (with)* [conclude, finish].
- ✧ *get to someone/{doing} something* [find time for (pressured)]
 In the midst of other obligations, you’ll have to try to *get to a chore, task, etc.*, but it only takes authority to *get someone to {doing} something* [cause to begin, arrange]. And sometimes doctors and sales clerks find it hard to *get to someone*.

✧ *get up on someone/{doing} something* [become informed about]

In preparation for a report, you would want to *get up on the subject*. Or if the boss will be making the report, you would need to *get someone up on the subject* [inform, update].

✧ *get up to {doing} something* [gather strength for, do with audacity]

The two meanings of this phrase may be merely the two sides of one coin. You might have to work out in order to *get up to mountain climbing*. On the other hand, you never can tell what he'll *get up to*. In the second sense, the activity is often mischief. Parents often cry, "Now what've you gotten up to?" When you *get someone up to {doing} something*, it's more connected to the second meaning: [arrange, convince], since it's also probably mischief.

✧ *get with {doing} something* [become attuned to]

Can you believe it? The last one! You may be told to *get with the program*, *following the instructions etc.*, but most often they'll simply say, *Get with it!*

There may well be other expressions with the verb 'get' that I've left out, though I doubt many. My apologies to any overlooked. Indeed Phrase 33 – the huge gorilla of many faces – brings us to the end of this remarkable "glossafari." We're now emerging, hopefully unscathed, from the darkest grammatical jungle. But before we get completely out of the woods, let's rest for a few minutes here in this nice clearing.

CHAPTER 10: *GOTCHA!**

Okay, friends! Now it's time for our grand finale! For your entertainment and delight, our wild verb's ensemble will perform a most remarkable feat. Way back in the Preface I claimed that 'get' is a colloquial code signaling an enormously wide range of actions, attitudes, emotions, intentions, and implications. Well, now watch how all those tricky little phrases and expressions can arrange themselves into a veritable tower of meanings covering just about every aspect of an action.

There are naturally umpteen basic aspects of an action, and each contains many nuanced 'get' expressions. Of course, the star performer will be our talented gorilla (33☛), and those agile apes, Phrases 10, 14, and 29, will be playing strong supporting roles.

[NECESSITY OF AN ACTION]

2. *HAVE/HAS GOT TO DO SOMETHING* [have to, must]

[REASON FOR AN ACTION]

9. *GET SOMETHING*
get a desire, hankering, urge, etc., (to do something) [want, desire, feel like]
29. *GET DONE*
get asked, ordered, etc., to do something [be asked, ordered]
get inspired, encouraged, etc., to do something [be inspired, encouraged]
get set on {doing} something [seriously intend]
get stuck (with) {doing} something [be made responsible]
- ☛33. *GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE*
get on to {doing} something [discover]
get someone on to {doing} something [cause to discover]

[POSSIBILITY OF AN ACTION]

10. *GET SOMETHING {FROM SOMEONE}*
get a shot at {doing} something [be allowed to attempt]
get license, permission, etc., to do something [obtain license, etc.]
27. *GET TO DO SOMETHING* [be allowed, find it possible]

* [I understand you!]

[ORGANIZING FOR AN ACTION]

4. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING
get a handle on {doing} something [understand, figure out]
get the hang of {doing} something [understand, figure out]
14. GET {TO BE} SOMEHOW
get ready to do something [prepare to do]
20. GET (SOMEONE/SOMETHING) SOMEHOW =
 GET SOMEHOW (SOMEONE/SOMETHING)
get it together to do something [organize, prepare]
29. GET DONE
get prepared to do something [prepare to do]
- 33♣ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE
get up on {doing} something [become well informed about]
get someone up on {doing} something [cause to become well informed]
get up to {doing} something [gather strength for]

[PARTICIPATION IN AN ACTION]

7. GET PREPOSITION SOMEONE
*get **after** someone (to do something)* [nag]
*get **on** someone (to do something)* [exert pressure on]
10. GET SOMETHING {FROM SOMEONE}
get backing, support, etc., to do something or for doing something [obtain backing, support, etc.]
18. GET SOMEHOW {WITH SOMEONE}
get together (with someone) to do something [join forces, accompany to]
28. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING TO DO SOMETHING
 [arrange, persuade to do]
29. GET DONE
get involved, implicated, etc., in doing something [become involved, etc.]
30. GET SOMEONE DONE
get someone involved, implicated, etc., in doing something [cause to be]
- 33♣ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE
get in on {doing} something [participate, be included]
get someone in on {doing} something [cause to be included]
get someone behind {doing} something [recruit, enlist]

[FINDING TIME FOR AN ACTION]

10. GET SOMETHING {FROM SOMEONE}
get a chance, opportunity, etc. to do something [find a chance, etc. to]

29. GET DONE

get scheduled to do something [schedule time to]

33❖ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE

get around to {doing} something [find time for (casual)]

get on to {doing} something [find time for]

get someone on to {doing} something [cause to find time for]

get to {doing} something [find time for (pressured)]

get someone to {doing} something [cause to find time for]

[ATTITUDE TOWARD AN ACTION]

9. GET SOMETHING

get a kick, thrill, etc., out of {doing} something [enjoy]

get one's jollies (from {doing} something) [enjoy]

14. GET {TO BE} SOMEHOW

get excited, depressed, etc., about {doing} something [become excited, etc.]

get in a hurry, rush to do something [hurry, rush to]

get tired, sick, etc., of {doing} something [become tired, sick of]

29. GET DONE

get used to {doing} something [become accustomed to]

get fed up with {doing} something [become disgusted]

33❖ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE

get against {doing} something [oppose]

get someone against {doing} something [cause to oppose]

get behind {doing} something [support, encourage]

get down on {doing} something [lose interest in, dislike]

get someone down on {doing} something [cause to lose interest in]

get into {doing} something [become involved/interested]

get someone into {doing} something [cause to become involved]

get off on {doing} something [enjoy, take pleasure in]

get with {doing} something [become attuned to]

[BEGINNING AN ACTION]

9. GET SOMETHING

get a jump on {doing} something [get a head start]

14. GET {TO BE} SOMEHOW

get under way in/with {doing} something [begin process of]

22. GET SOMETHING SOMEHOW

get a leg up (on {doing} something) [do part of task early]

31. GET (TO) DOING SOMETHING

get cracking (at {doing} something) [start, begin]

[start seriously, energetically]

32. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING (TO) DOING SOMETHING

	[cause to start, begin]
33☛ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE	
get about {doing} something	[begin casually]
get after {doing} something	[begin with haste]
get someone after {doing} something	[cause to begin with haste]
get back to {doing} something	[start again]
get someone back to {doing} something	[cause to start again]
get in(to) the habit of {doing} something	[start as a habit]
get on(to) {doing} something	[begin with force, soon]
get someone on(to) {doing} something	[cause to begin with force]

[ATTENTION DEVOTED TO AN ACTION]

14. GET {TO BE} SOMEHOW

get serious, lazy, etc. about {doing} something [become serious, lazy about]

29. GET DONE

get fixated, focused, etc., on {doing} something [become fixated, etc.]

33☛ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE

get at {doing} something	[address oneself to]
get down to {doing} something	[devote serious attention, effort]
get off doing something	[have the audacity to do]
get up to {doing} something	[do with audacity]
get someone up to {doing} something	[cause to do with audacity]

[PROGRESS IN AN ACTION]

14. GET {TO BE} SOMEHOW

get good, skillful, etc., at {doing} something [become adept, etc.]

24. GET SOMEHOW

get along (well, poorly, etc.) in {doing} something [progress well, poorly]

29. GET DONE

get distracted from {doing} something [be distracted]

get stuck in/on {doing} something [be obstructed]

33☛ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE

get ahead in/on {doing} something [move ahead in, progress]

get behind in/with {doing} something [fall behind, lag]

get someone behind in/with {doing} something [cause to fall behind]

get on top of {doing} something [gain control of/over]

get on with {doing} something [proceed, continue]

get someone on with {doing} something [cause to continue]

[FINISHING AN ACTION]

29. GET DONE
get finished (with) {doing} something [finish, conclude]
- 33☛ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE
get away from {doing} something [stop gradually]
get someone away from {doing} something [cause to stop gradually]
get done {(with) {doing} something} [finish, conclude]
get someone done (with) {doing} something [cause to finish]
get off/off from {doing} something [finish intentionally]
get someone off/off from {doing} something [cause to finish intentionally]
get over (with) {doing} something =
get {doing} something over (with) [finish as a matter of course]
get through (with){doing} something [finish with some urgency]
get someone through (with) {doing} something [cause to finish]

[ACHIEVING AN ACTION]

3. DO/GET SOMETHING [do something (replacement)]
 29. GET DONE [be done (passive auxiliary)]
 30. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING DONE [cause to be done]
 GET SOMETHING DONE [do successfully]
- 33☛ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE
get away with {doing} something [achieve w/o consequence]
get by (with) {doing} something [barely achieve]
get off with {doing} something [merely have to]
get someone off with {doing} something [arrange for limits]

[AVOIDING AN ACTION]

10. GET SOMETHING {FROM SOMEONE}
get a reprieve from {doing} something [obtain a reprieve]
29. GET DONE
get excused, released from {doing} something [be excused, etc.]
- 33☛ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE
get around {doing} something [avoid, circumvent]
get someone around {doing} something [cause to avoid, circumvent]
get out of {doing} something [avoid, escape from]
get someone out of {doing} something [cause to avoid]

[RECOVERING FROM AN ACTION]

33♣ GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE

get over{doing} something

[**recover from**]

get someone over {doing} something

[**cause to recover from**]

[RESULTS OF AN ACTION]

10. GET SOMETHING {FROM SOMEONE}

get an award, honor, etc., for {doing} something [**receive an award, etc.**]

26. GET SOMEONE/SOMETHING SOMEHOW

get something out of {doing} something

[**benefit from**]

29. GET DONE

get punished, rewarded, etc., for {doing} something [**be punished, etc.**]

CHAPTER 11: GET IT OVER WITH ALREADY!*

Thank you, thank you! But please don't leave yet! In appreciation, our wild verb insists on an encore – so you won't go away unsatisfied. The simian ensemble will now perform their splendid panorama of feelings and interpersonal relations.

[PERSONAL FEELINGS, CONDITIONS]

9. *GET SOMETHING*
get a headache, cold, broken arm, cramp/etc. [contract, catch, suffer]
get a boost/buzz/charge/lift/jolt/rush [be energized]
get a feeling, fright, shock, surprise, thrill, etc. [experience emotionally]
get the blues [become sad, dejected]
get a laugh (from/out of someone) [be amused]
get one's jollies (from {doing} something) [enjoy]
get a burr under one's saddle, one's bowels
in an uproar, one's pants in a bunch,
one's nose out of joint [become upset, angry]
get the heebie-jeebies, jitters, shakes, willies [become disturbed, nervous]
get cold feet [become frightened]
14. *GET {TO BE} SOMEHOW*
get angry, bashful, curious, delirious, etc. [become]
get in(to) a frenzy, huff, rage, state, etc. [become upset]
get down [become depressed].
get out of sorts [become discontent]
get under the weather [become ill, indisposed]
22. *GET SOMETHING SOMEHOW*
get a buzz on [become intoxicated]
get a load off [relax]
29. *GET DONE*
get agitated, bored, depressed, etc. [be/become]

[RELATE TO SOMEONE (generally)]

18. *GET SOMEHOW {WITH SOMEONE}*
get along {with someone} [relate peaceably]
get down with someone [enjoy, have fun]
get in with someone [develop relationship]
get on {with someone} [relate well]

* [Finish the job quickly!]

33. *GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE*
get something against someone [develop a grudge, begin to dislike]
get down on someone [lose interest in, dislike]
get into someone [become involved/interested]
get off on someone [enjoy]

[RELATE TO SOMEONE (sexually)]

If only for thoroughness, we should pull together the many sexual expressions with 'get,' and this is probably the best way to do it.

8. *GET SOMEONE {WITH SOMETHING}*
get someone [have sexual relations]
9. *GET SOMETHING*
get the hots for someone [desire (usually sexually)]
get a crush (on someone) [become infatuated]
18. *GET SOMEHOW {WITH SOMEONE}*
get off {with someone} [achieve orgasm]
20. *GET (SOMEONE) SOMEHOW*
get someone up [cause to have an erection]
22. *GET SOMETHING SOMEHOW*
get it off [achieve orgasm]
get a hard/bone on [achieve an erection]
get it on (with someone) [be sexually active]
get one's rocks off [achieve orgasm]
get it up [achieve an erection]
29. *GET DONE*
get laid [have sex]
32. *GET SOMEONE DOING SOMETHING*
get someone going [excite]
33. *GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE*
get someone off [cause orgasm]

[AFFECT, INFLUENCE SOMEONE (negatively)]

6. *GET SOMEONE* [aggravate, irritate, perturb, puzzle, confuse,
 trick, affect in some manner, usually negative]
get someone's goat [aggravate, irritate]
get someone good [affect strongly]
7. *GET PREPOSITION SOMEONE*
get to someone [reach; affect]
get on someone's nerves [aggravate, irritate]

15. GET SOMEONE {TO BE} SOMEHOW
get someone angry, in(to) a rage, etc. [cause to become angry]
get someone under control [subdue, control]
20. GET (SOMEONE) SOMEHOW = GET SOMEHOW (SOMEONE)
get someone off = get off someone [aggravate, irritate]
30. GET SOMEONE DONE
get someone aggravated, etc. [cause to be aggravated, etc.]

[AFFECT, INFLUENCE SOMEONE (positively or neutrally)]

15. GET SOMEONE {TO BE} SOMEHOW
get someone happy, etc. [cause to become happy, etc.]
28. GET SOMEONE TO DO SOMETHING
 [arrange for, persuade]
30. GET SOMEONE DONE
get someone satisfied, etc. [cause to be satisfied, etc.]
32. GET SOMEONE (TO) DOING SOMETHING [cause to start, begin]
33. GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE
get behind someone [support, encourage]
get someone behind {doing} something [recruit, enlist]
get someone on(to) {doing} something [cause to begin soon, assign, order]
get someone to {doing} something [cause to begin, arrange]
get someone up to {doing} something [arrange, convince]

[CONTACT, MEET WITH SOMEONE]

18. GET SOMEHOW {AT/OF/TO/WITH SOMEONE}
get ahold of someone [contact]
get back with/to someone [renew contact with]
get up with someone [make contact with]
get together {with someone} [meet with, assemble]
20. GET (SOMEONE) SOMEHOW = GET SOMEHOW (SOMEONE)
get someone together = get together someone [gather, assemble]

[COMMUNICATE WITH SOMEONE]

4. GET SOMEONE [understand, comprehend]
7. GET PREPOSITION SOMEONE
get at something [intend, mean]
17. GET SOMEHOW
get across/through (to someone) [communicate, be understood]
18. GET SOMEHOW {WITH SOMEONE}
get together {with someone} on something [agree]

19. *GET SOMETHING SOMEHOW*
get something across/over/through (to someone) [communicate]
33. *GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE*
get someone up on something [inform, update]

[EXCHANGE SOMETHING WITH SOMEONE]

10. *GET SOMETHING {FROM SOMEONE}* [receive, obtain, etc.]
11. *GET SOMETHING TO SOMEONE* [deliver]
13. *GET {SOMEONE} SOMETHING =*
GET SOMETHING {FOR SOMEONE} [bring, fetch, etc.]

[DO SOMETHING TO SOMEONE (negatively)]

5. *GET SOMEONE {BY/AROUND SOMETHING}* [sieze, hold, catch]
7. *GET PREPOSITION SOMEONE*
get after someone [pursue, harass, nag]
get at someone [attack]
get on(to) someone [punish, reprimand]
8. *GET SOMEONE {WITH SOMETHING}* [strike, hit, hurt]
get it in the neck [be seriously hurt, affected]
out to get someone [with harmful intention]
get someone (for {doing} something) [apprehend, arrest]
9. *GET SOMETHING*
get a grip, hold on someone [control, manage, seize]
get the jump on someone [ambush, apprehend]
18. *GET SOMEHOW {WITH SOMEONE}*
get back at someone ⇔ get someone back [pay back, avenge]
get even {with someone} [take revenge on]
20. *GET SOMETHING SOMEHOW = GET SOMEHOW SOMETHING*
get something off on someone = get off something on someone [play a trick, joke]
24. *GET SOMEHOW {SOMEWHERE}*
get by someone [evade, avoid]
33. *GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE*
get someone in(to) trouble, a fix, mess, etc. [cause to experience difficulty]
get through with someone [finish with some urgency]

[DO SOMETHING TO SOMEONE (positively or neutrally)]

9. *GET SOMETHING*
get a look at/glimpse of someone [see, observe]
get a fix on someone [focus on, aim at]
20. *GET SOMEONE SOMEHOW = GET SOMEHOW SOMEONE*
get someone up = get up someone [awaken]
get someone up = get up someone [arrange a costume, disguise]
22. *GET SOMETHING SOMEHOW*
get it on (for someone) [applaud]
24. *GET SOMEHOW {SOMEWHERE}*
get close to someone [approach, draw near]
25. *GET SOMEONE {TO/FROM} SOMEWHERE* [move, take, transport]
33. *GET (SOMEONE) {SOMEHOW} PREPHRASE*
get someone behind {doing} something [recruit, enlist]
get someone in on {doing} something [include]
*get **on** to someone* [discover]
get over someone [recover from]
get to someone [find time for (pressured)]
get up on someone [become well informed about]

And that, dear friends, is the size of it. Thanks for coming along.

EPILOGUE – GO GET ‘EM!*

Hopefully, you’ll soon get over the rigors of our long safari, but like me, I doubt you’ll ever get over the wonderfully wild and wicked little word ‘get.’ I do hope that, like me, you got a kick out of its outrageous behavior.

But one last reminder: If you want to get fluent in spoken “American,” you’ve really got to get on top of all the crazy antics of this wild verb. Otherwise you simply won’t get what people are getting at. And when you get into conversations yourself, and get to using the phrases wrong, you won’t get understood properly (or maybe even won’t get a job). So get it together, get on it, and you’ll get there!

No need to get carried away. I know. So sorry.

Again, I hope you’ve had a real nice time and have possibly gotten get. Y’all come back now. Oh, and be sure and tell all your friends about our fabulous wild verb show!



* Contraction for *Go get them!* [**Go after, seize them!/Get out there and fight!**]

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