THE WORLD OF UP

In English Sentences

Useful ways native English speakers use the word up

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"Up" is one of those many English words that native English speakers use more frequently than do most Chinese speakers. Non-native English speakers generally have no problem with this word in its standard directional use, as in…

…but they not only tend to neglect using other "up" phrases, they sometimes fail to understand native speakers' meaning when they use these very common phrases.

There are a few that most Chinese students of English understand. For example, they tend to know the meaning of, "shut up."

In order to better understand native speakers, and to expand your ability to express yourself in English, you should be able to use the following "up" phrases. Sentence-use examples are provided in the boxes.

COMMON "**UP**" SET PHRASES

Hurry up: There is basically no difference between "hurry" and "hurry up," except "hurry up" is more often used alone, rather than in a complete sentence.

Speak up: This one has two meanings, depending upon the context of its use. First, when a person is not speaking loud enough, we say "speak up" to mean speak louder. The other use of "speak up" is used to tell a person to stand up (another "up" phrase) for their opinion or rights, or to make someone aware of something they should be told. Below are some examples of this use of the phrase.

Teacher, to a student who is saying something, but not loud enough: "Speak up. I can't hear you." (Note: Sometimes "speak up" expresses the need to speak louder, while other times it expresses a need to not be shy.

To a co-worker: "The boss is making you work too much overtime. He's taking advantage of you because you never object. You need to speak up for yourself." (Note: "speak up" in this sentence can also be expressed as "stand up.")

Lock up: Simply means to lock the door when you leave. This is especially used when it is the end of a work day or the end of an event, as in the following sample sentences.

1. If you are the last one out of the office, be sure you lock up.

2. I left my book at school. I better hurry back before they lock up.

Line up: to get into line (queue); to form a line.

1. Teacher to children: It's time to go back to the classroom. "Everybody line up."

2. To people getting ready to enter a cinema: "Everybody line up at the door."

3. To people standing in front of a subway door, crowding disorderly: "Line up." (Note: this can also be expressed as, "get in line."

Note: *Line up* and *queue up* have essentially the same meaning. In North America, people generally say *line up*, while in the UK they usually say *queue up*.

Listen up: to listen to (imperative voice)

Everybody listen up. I have something important to say.

Note: One of the most common uses of *listen up*, by teachers, is when students in a classroom are getting to noisy.

Pair up: everyone get into pairs

Teacher to class, before a pair work activity: "Everybody pair up" (find a partner).

Break up: a couple to end their relationship

Jack and Anna aren't getting along very well. I'm afraid they will break up.

Mary and William broke up yesterday. (Note: *Broke* is the past tense form of *break*.)

Break it up: stop a quarrel, fight, or activity

A mother to her children who are fighting: "Hey you two, break it up."

Note: *Broken* (adj.) *up* can refer to a person who is crying.

What's up?: How are you? (Used as an informal greeting)

Hi Joe, what's up?

Sneak up (on): to walk toward a person without letting them know you are there.

The dog is sneaking up on the rabbit.

A thief snuck up on me and took my phone.

Note: *Snuck* is the past tense of *sneak*, although in some cases, *sneaked* may be used.

Finish up: to finish an activity or project

Boss to employee: "Finish (it) up quickly. It must be done before 5:00."

I cannot go to dinner with you. I need to finish up my homework.

Note: In most cases, *up* can be omitted.

Wake up: to stop sleeping

It's time to wake up.

I usually wake up at 6:00.

Sorry I'm late for work. I woke up late.

Note: *Woke* is the past tense of *wake*.

Look up / look it up (a word in the dictionary): to look for a word and its meaning

I don't know the meaning of this word. I'll look it up.

English teacher to class: Speak only English. If you need help, you may look up words in the dictionary.

Bundle up: to put on warm clothes

It's cold outside. Make sure you bundle up.

Wrap it up: finish / stop for the day / wrap a package)

I need to wrap this project up today.

At the end of the workday: "Let's wrap it up for today."

Talking about Mary's birthday gift: "Hurry, wrap it up before Mary gets here."

Walk (come/go) up to (me, her, it…): To move toward and near a person

She just walked up to me and started talking, as if we already knew each other.

Many students walk (come) up to me after class to ask questions.

Walk up to the service counter and ask for help.

Pull up (to): When driving a car: to move the car near

Pull up to the window and order your food.

Pull over: To move a car to the side of the road

I have a flat tire. I'll pull over and change it.

The police made me pull over because I was driving too fast.

WITH OTHER PLACE AND DIRECTIONAL WORDS

Hurry up in there: The person or people being spoken to are in a different room.

Line up over there / Line up in the hallway: Telling people where to line up.

Pair up on this side of the room: Telling people where to form pairs.

Break up in the winter: A couple ends their relationship in the winter.

Shut up in there: The person or people being spoken to are in a different room.

What's up with him? What's wrong with him?

They're locking up the classroom. You'll have to finish up in the library.

DESCRIBING WHERE SOMEONE/SOMETHING IS

(DOUBLE PLACE-DIRECTIONAL WORDS)

He's up on the third floor.

The bird is up in a tree.

My house is up on that mountain.

She put the book up on the top shelf.

The airplane is up in the sky.

It's hot today. The temperature is up in the thirties.

The salt is up (in the top cupboard) by (beside) the sugar.

What are you waiting for?

Hurry up and start using UP in your English today!