

【研究ノート】

## Rethinking the Place for Phrasal Verbs In International Business Communication

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This paper is a continuation of my efforts in advocating the restricted use of phrasal verbs (two - and three-word verbs) of Anglo-Saxon origin for international business communication, at various occasions of the Association for Business Communication (ABC) based in the U.S. For example, at ABC, Hamilton, NZ., Dec. 1997, at ABC, Singapore, Sept. 1998, at ABC, San Antonio, Nov. 1998 and at ABC, Los Angeles, Nov. 1999.

At the Los Angeles presentation I spoke under the title of The Place for Phrasal Verbs and contended that phrasal verbs at times hinder smooth communication, especially in international scenes. I concluded that if native speakers are to be successful communicators, they should avoid the overuse of phrasal verbs such as *make out*, *come up to* and *come up with*, and use instead *understand*, *equal* and *think of*.

A phrasal-prepositional verb consists of a verb, an adverb particle, and a preposition.

We must *cut down on* expenses.

They *put* their failure *down to* bad advice.

The meaning of some of these verbal constructions can be guessed from the meanings of their parts (e.g. *cut down on*).

But the meaning of others is idiomatic (e.g. *put down to*). Nowadays, the term “phrasal verbs” is often used to include phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, and phrasal-prepositional verbs.

Grammatically, some phrasal-prepositional verbs such as “*put down to*” are idiomatic and therefore, are difficult to understand because we cannot guess the meaning from its parts. For this purpose *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs accompanied by COBUILD* is useful in understanding the meaning of a phrasal verb in question.

However, I have arrived at a conclusion that, in International Business Communication, certain idiomatic phrasal verbs which are not well known to non-native speakers of English should, no doubt, be sparingly used by native English users. Therefore, for the sake of native English speakers, I started compiling a kind of ‘negative’ list of phrasal verbs and published it in *Kanagawa University Studies in Language*, Vol. 22, 1999.

In selecting those ‘difficult’ phrasal verbs, (i.e. those that are difficult for non-native English users) I took advantage of *Chambers Pocket Guide to Phrasal Verbs*, 1982, because its parent publication, *Chambers Universal Learners’ Dictionary* can be trusted. In addition, the pocket guide has a Japanese edition with Japanese translation for each meaning and examples, leaving little room for confusion.

In the attached sheets you will find a comparison of three kinds of dictionaries. Compared to CHAMBERS PHRASAL, COBUILD PHRASAL is more explanatory, sometimes too explanatory and even misleading. On the contrary, WEBSTER’S AM-ENGLISH is so concise and to the point. For (No entry) words in WEBSTER’S AM-ENGLISH I double-checked with *NTC’s American English Learner’s Dictionary* by Macmillan Languagehouse, Japan, 1998.

In the case of COBUILD PHRASAL, I failed to find ‘credit ... with’ and ‘go on at’ and quoted the explanation found in

*Collins COBUILD English Dictionary*, Harper Collins Publishers, 1995. For WEBSTER'S AM-ENGLISH, 'check up on' was only found in NTS's Dictionary. It is likely that (no entry) words in American English are colloquial or informal expressions in British English. If we study from the aspect of American English, there will develop other thoughts but I dared not do so.

As to *Chambers Pocket Guide to Phrasal Verbs*, it may be necessary to add a few remarks to them. One is that such expressions as *make out* and *come up with* are treated as transitive verbs and noted [trans.], and no object verbs are treated as intransitive verbs and noted [intrans.]. Furthermore, depending on whether a phrasal verb can be separable (e.g. rule ...out) or unseparable (e.g. run across), such notations are provided.

**Comparison of 'Difficult' Phrasal Verbs included in *Chambers Pocket Guide to Phrasal Verbs* with those appearing in *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs* and *Random House Webster's Dictionary of American English***

Here, difficult means 'difficult to understand for non-native English users.'

The writer checked with *Chambers Pocket Guide to Phrasal Verbs* which accompanies *Chambers Universal Learners' Dictionary*, edited by George W. Davidson and published by Federal Publications, U.K. in 1982. Japanese edition by Hirota Norio, Hokuseido, Tokyo in 1989.

As a result, the writer classified two categories of phrasal verbs, as follows:

- I Phrasal (two-word) verbs whose meanings are not clear to non-native English users ——— 27 cases

## II Three-word verbs whose proper meanings are difficult to understand ——— 47 cases

To avoid any misunderstanding, I tried to quote one model sentence under each heading, so that we can more easily grasp the meaning of each phrasal verb in question.

This time, I haven't increased the list of 'difficult' phrasal verbs, because I do not wish to burden both non-native English users and English teachers and professionals with an overwhelmingly long list. My intention remains the same in stressing the need for avoiding the overuse of 'difficult' phrasal verbs.

For the purpose of comparison, Collins *COBUILD Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*, 1989 and *Random House Webster's Dictionary of American English*, 1997 were used.

### Phrasal Verbs

### Synonyms

#### I TWO-WORD VERBS

add up	total
bail out	rescue
bargain for	anticipate
credit ... with	believe to be
cry off (Br.)	cancel suddenly
dip into	spend
egg on	encourage
fall through	collapse
get across	<be> understood
help out	assist awhile
make out	understand
plow back	invest anew
reckon on	expect

rule out	ignore
run across	meet by chance
run off	print
run through	read quickly
salt away	save
score off (Br.)	scold
set about	begin; start
set in	arrive
set on [upon]	attack
trade in	give
turn down	refuse; reject
visit with [Am.]	call and talk
vouch for	guarantee
wade in (Br.)	attack fiercely

## II THREE-WORD VERBS

average out at (Br.)	average
catch up (with)	overtake
check up on	investigate
come up to	equal
come up with	produce; supply
crack down on	take (stern) measures
date back to	begin
do away with	abolish
face up to	meet
fall back on	rely on
fall in with	meet by chance
gang up on	combine against
get around [round] to	begin reluctantly
get away with	do unpunished

get down to	attend
get in with	associate with
get on to (Br.)	contact
get up to (Br.)	reach
go around with	associate with
go down with (Br.)	fall (ill)
go in for	<be> absorbed in
go on at (Br.)	scold
go through with	stick to
grow out of	outgrow
hammer away at	keep working at
hold out on	withhold from
keep in with (Br.)	stay friendly with
keep out of	stand aloof from
lead up to	prepare the way for
live it up	pursue pleasure
look down on	belittle
look forward to	anticipate
	(with pleasure)
look up to	admire; respect
make up for	compensate; repay
make up to (Br.)	flatter
open on to (Br.)	remain unlocked
put up with	tolerate
rub off on	<be> inherited to
send away for	order to deliver by mail
settle up with	pay
stick out for (Br.)	keep demanding
stick up for	defend; support
take up with	keep company with
talk down to	degrade; despise

wait up (for)  
walk away with

stay late at night  
win easily

Here, please note that those words listed in the 'Synonyms' column are not necessarily the 'big words of Latin origin' and the like. Some words are listed because they are more easily understandable and clearer in meaning as compared to those phrasal verbs listed in the left-hand column.

However, this is my first attempt to make such a list, and I hope to improve it with the readers' opinions. Therefore, any comments you may care to make are most welcome.

## References

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## Appendix

CHAMBERS  
PHRASALCOBUILD  
PHRASALWEBSTER'S  
AM-ENGLISH

## I TWO-WORD VERBS

*add up* (colloq.)  
intrans.  
— it just doesn't add  
up.

If you add up several  
numbers, you calcu-  
late their total. (Also,  
v + adv.)

add up [no obj]  
[ ~ + obj]

*bail out* trans.  
separable  
bail out someone ac-  
cused

If you bail out some-  
one who is in custody,  
...

to pay the bail for ...  
[ ~ + obj]  
[bail + obj + out]

*bargain for* trans.  
unseparable (nega-  
tive)  
I didn't bargain for...

If something hap-  
pens that you had  
not bargained for,  
you did not expect it  
happen.

to expect to get  
anticipate receiving

*credit ... with* trans.  
must separate.  
I don't credit her with  
much intelligence.

(No entry) Dictio-  
nary:  
If you credit some-  
one with a quality,  
you believe or say  
that they have it.

[credit + obj + with +  
obj]  
to believe to be or  
have

*cry off* (colloq.) trans.  
After promising to  
come to the party she  
cried off at the last  
minute.

If you cry off, you  
change your mind  
and decide not to do  
something that you  
had arranged or  
agreed to do.

(No entry)

*dip into* trans.

If you dip into a book

[ ~ + obj] to reach



unseparable I've been dipping into my savings quite a lot ...	or subject, you look at it occasionally and briefly without read- ing or studying it se- riously	down into some- thing; to withdraw something; to be- come interested slightly
<i>egg on</i> (colloq.) separable She egged him on to apply for a job.	If you egg someone on, you encourage them to do some- thing foolish or dar- ing.	Idiom. <i>egg on one's face</i> obvious embarrass- ment caused by one's own mistake
<i>fall through</i> intrans. We had planned to go to Paris, but the plan fell through.	If an arrangement or plan falls through, something goes wrong before it can be completed...	[no obj] to fail to be accomplished; col- lapse
<i>get across</i> (colloq.) intrans. This is something rarely get across to the general public.	If an idea or an argu- ment gets across, or get it across, you suc- ceed in making other people understand it.	to (cause to) be or become clearly un- derstood [get + obj + across]
<i>help out</i> (colloq.) 'help temporarily' I don't mind helping out in the shop from time to time.	If you help out or help someone out, you do them a favor, such as lending them money or doing some of their work.	to assist during a time of need [no obj]
<i>make out</i> trans. separable Can you make out what he's trying to say?	If you make out something that is difficult to under- stand, you manage to understand.	to understand; figure out the meaning of; fathom
	(No entry) <i>plough</i>	

<p><i>plow back</i> trans. separable He made a profit last year, but plowed it back so that he could ...</p>	<p><i>back</i> If you plough profits back into a business, you spend them on improving the business...</p>	<p>to invest or make use of (money) to plow back our profits into new equipment</p>
<p><i>reckon on</i> formal [upon] trans. unseparable I am reckoning on meeting him tonight.</p>	<p>If you reckon on something, you feel certain that it will happen and include it into your plans.</p>	<p>to count, depend or rely: expect: The general didn't reckon on a surprise attack.</p>
<p><i>rule out</i> trans. separable You mustn't rule out the possibility of bad weather.</p>	<p>If you rule out an idea or a course of action, you decide that it is impossible or unsuitable. • <i>Dismiss</i> means almost the same as <i>rule out</i>.</p>	<p>to eliminate from thinking about ; to decide to ignore</p>
<p><i>run across</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable (incidentally meet a person) I ran across an old friend.</p>	<p>If you run across someone, you meet them unexpectedly.</p>	<p>to meet or find accidentally</p>
<p><i>run off</i> trans. separable He run off 500 copies of the President's speech.</p>	<p>If you run off copies of a piece of writing, you produce them using a machine such as...</p>	<p>to print, print out, or duplicate</p>
<p><i>run through</i> trans. unseparable He ran through the</p>	<p>If you run through something, you repeat or read it quickly.</p>	<p>to practice or rehearse</p>

names on the list.

• *Go through* and *run over* means almost the same as *run through*.

*salt away* (colloq.)  
trans. separable  
He has a pile of money salted away.

If you salt away money, you do not spend it, but save it or keep it somewhere for the future.

to save (money)  
for future use

*score off* trans.  
unseparable cf. gain  
an advantage over  
He's always scoring off his wife in public.

If you score off someone, you make a clever or insulting reply to something they have said.

(No entry)

*set about* trans.  
unseparable meaning 'begin'  
She set about planning her holiday.

If you set about doing something, you start to do it in an energetic or purposeful way.

to begin; to start

*set in* intrans.  
Winter has set in early.

If something unpleasant sets in, it begins and seems likely to continue or develop.

[no obj] to begin to come; arrive

*set on [upon]* trans.  
unseparable (usually in passive voice)  
He set on [attacked] me in the dark.

If animals or people set on you, or if you are set upon by them, they make sudden and unexpected physical attack on you.

to attack

If you trade in an old

<i>trade in</i> trans. separable We decided to trade in our old car and get a new one.	car, machine, or piece of equipment, you give it to a dealer when you buy a new one so that you get a reduction on the price.	to give (a used ar- ticle) as payment to- ward a purchase of something new
<i>turn down</i> trans. separable He turned down her offer [request].	If you turn down a person, their re- quest, or their offer, you refuse their re- quest or offer.	to refuse or reject (a person, etc.)
<i>visit with</i> trans. unseparable Am.usage She is visiting with her family.	If you visit with someone, you go and see them and spend time with them.	to get to and stay with (a person or family): Come to visit with us for a few hours.
<i>vouch for</i> trans. unseparable I can vouch for his honesty.	If you say that you can or will vouch for someone, you mean that you are sure that they will behave correctly, and...	to give a guarantee or act as surety or sponsor; take respon- sibility
wade in (colloq.) intrans.    meaning ‘attack fiercely’ He waded in at her for her clumsiness.	If you are faced with a difficult situation or a lot of work and wade in, you start dealing with it in a determined and en- ergetic way.	(No entry)

CHAMBERS  
PHRASALCOBUILD  
PHRASALWEBSTER'S  
AM-ENGLISH

## II THREE-WORD VERBS

*average out at* trans.  
unseparable  
His car's petrol consumption averaged out at ten liters a week.

If a set of numbers averages out at a particular figure, that figure is the average for the set of numbers.

(No entry)

*catch up (with)*  
intrans.  
We waited for him to catch up with us.

If you catch up with someone who is in front of you, you reach them by walking faster than they are walking.

to overtake  
someone or something moving

*check up on* trans.  
separable  
We have been checking on him.

If you check up on someone or something, you obtain information about them, often secretly. The council checked up on her and decided that she was unsuitable for employment.

(No entry)  
NTC's American English Learner's Dictionary (1998) Macmillan: to investigate; to seek out the facts about something

*come up to* trans.  
unseparable  
This piece of work doesn't come up to your usual high standard.

If something does not come up to expectations or a particular standard, it is not as good as people expected it to be.

to compare with as to quantity, excellence, etc. ; equal

*come up with* trans.

If you come up with

to produce; supply:

unseparable He's come up with a great idea.	a plan, idea, or solution, you think of it and suggest it.	What new plan did you come up with?
<i>crack down on</i> trans. unseparable meaning 'to take severe measures' The police is cracking down on vandals in this area.	To crack down on a group of people means to become stricter in making them obey rules or laws in punishing those who do not obey the rules.	crack down, to take severe measures, esp. in enforcing regulations crack down on, a campaign to crack down on drug pushers
<i>date back to</i> trans. unseparable = date from Their quarrel dates back to last year.	If something dates back to a particular time, it has existed since that time.	to belong to a particular period; to start or exist from
<i>do away with</i> trans. unseparable They did away with uniforms at that school years ago.	To do away with something means to get rid of it. • <i>Eliminate</i> is a more formal word for <i>do away with</i> .	to put an end to; abolish
<i>face up to</i> trans. unseparable He faced up to his difficult situation.	If you face up to a difficult situation, you accept it and deal with it.	to meet courageously He had to face up to the possibility of losing his job.
<i>fall back on</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable = as a last resort Whatever happens, you have your father's money to fall back on.	If you fall back on or upon something that you know you can rely on, you use it or do it when other things have failed. • <i>Resort to</i> means	to have recourse to; rely on: We had no savings to fall back on.

almost the same as  
*fall back on*.

*fall in with* trans.  
unseparable  
On the way home we  
fell in with some  
friends.

If you fall in with  
someone, you meet  
them by chance and  
often become friends  
with them.

to start to associate  
with: to fall in with  
bad company

*gang up on* (colloq.)  
trans. unseparable  
The manager felt  
that the younger  
members of staff was  
ganging up on him.

If people gang up on  
someone else, they  
unite against them  
in a fight or argu-  
ment; used in infor-  
mal English.

to combine  
against: Her three  
brothers are always  
ganging up on her.

*get around [round] to*  
(colloq.) trans.  
unseparable  
I don't know when I'll  
get around to (paint-  
ing) the door.

If you get round or  
around to doing  
something, you do it  
after a long delay be-  
cause you were pre-  
viously too busy or  
reluctant to do it.

(No entry)

*get away with* trans.  
unseparable mean-  
ing 'not punished'  
Murder is a serious  
crime and one rarely  
gets away with it.

If you get away with  
something that you  
should not have  
done, you are not  
criticized or pun-  
ished for doing it.

to do something un-  
punished: She got  
away with a lot of  
mistakes.

*get down to* trans.  
unseparable  
I must get down to  
work tonight, as I've  
got exams next week.

When you get down  
to something, you  
start doing it seri-  
ously and with a lot  
of attention.

to concentrate; at-  
tend

<p><i>get in with</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable He is trying to get in with the boss in order to get a pay raise.</p>	<p>If you get in with someone, you flatter them and become friendly with them often because you think that they can help you; a very informal expression.</p>	<p>to enter into close association: She got in with a bad crowd.</p>
<p><i>get on to</i> trans. unseparable You must get on to the airline at once to see if your flight has been delayed.</p>	<p>If you get on to someone, you contact them.</p>	<p>(No entry)</p>
<p><i>get up to</i> trans. unseparable So far I've got up to page sixty.</p>	<p>When you talk about what someone gets up to, you are referring to what they do, especially when it is something you don't approve of; a very informal expression.</p>	<p>(No entry)</p>
<p><i>go around with</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable I don't like the group of friends you are going around with.</p>	<p><i>go around</i> See go round; go around is slightly more formal. If you go round or around with someone, or go round together, you regularly meet them and go to different places with them.</p>	<p>to be often in company; went around with a bad crowd</p>
<p><i>go down with</i> (colloq.)</p>	<p>If you go down with an illness, you catch</p>	<p>(No entry)</p>



trans. unseparable = fall ill He has gone down with flu.	it or develop it.	
<i>go in for</i> trans. unseparable I'm not going in for the 1000 meter race.	If you go in for a par- ticular kind of work, you like it and regu- larly do it, wear it. use it, and so on.	to occupy oneself with: He goes in for chess.
<i>go on at</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable Her mother went on at her for coming late after the dance.	(No entry) Dictionary (1995): If you go on about something, or in British English go on at someone, you con- tinue talking about the same thing, often in an annoying way; an informal use.	(No entry) cf. go on to happen or take place What's going on at the office?
<i>go through with</i> trans. unseparable I'm going to go through with this in spite of what you say.	If you go through with a decision or an action, you continue to do what is neces- sary in order to achieve it or com- plete it although this may be difficult or unpleasant.	to stay with (some- thing) to the end: She went through with the divorce.
<i>grow out of</i> trans. unseparable He has grown out of that coat.	If a child grows out of an item of cloth- ing, he or she be- comes so tall or big that the clothing no longer fits them properly.	to become too large or mature for; out- grow: has already grown out of her baby clothes to keep making hard-

<i>hammer away at</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable We'll hammer away at this until we get it solved.	If you hammer away at something, you work at it constantly and with great en- ergy.	working attempts at something
<i>hold out on</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable He says he knew nothing about it, but I think he's holding out on me.	If you hold out on someone, you refuse to tell them some- thing that you know or give them some- thing that you prom- ised to give them.	[ no obj ] to withhold something expected or due: You'd better not holding out on me.
<i>keep in with</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable It's a good idea to keep in with the po- lice in case you need their help one day.	If you keep in with someone, you stay friendly with them, often in order to gain some advantage for yourself.	(No entry)
<i>keep out of</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable I tried to keep out of the argument, as it was none of my busi- ness.	If you keep out of an unpleasant situa- tion, you avoid be- coming involved in it.	(No entry)
<i>lead up to</i> trans. unseparable We studied the events leading up to the Second World War	The events and peri- ods of time that lead up to a final situa- tion happen one after the other until that situation is reached.	to prepare the for: A number of reports led up to the stock market crash.
<i>live it up</i> (colloq.)	<i>live up</i>	Informal: to live in a

<p>intrans. unseparable meaning 'carefree' He started to live it up after he got out of college.</p>	<p>If you live it up, you have a very enjoyable and exciting time, usually spending a lot of money and doing all the things that you want to do.</p>	<p>wild manner; pursue pleasure</p>
<p><i>look down on</i> trans. unseparable She has always looked down on us for not having a car.</p>	<p>If you look down on someone or something, you think they are inferior or unimportant.</p>	<p>look down on or upon: to regard with a feeling of superiority or contempt</p>
<p><i>look forward to</i> trans. unseparable I am looking forward to seeing you.</p>	<p>If you look forward to something that is going to happen, you want it happen because you expect to enjoy it.</p>	<p>to anticipate with eagerness or pleasure</p>
<p><i>look up to</i> trans. unseparable He has always looked up to his father.</p>	<p>If you look up to someone, you respect and admire them.</p>	<p>regard with admiration or respect: A lot of people look up to you, so don't let them down.</p>
<p><i>make up for</i> trans. unseparable This will make up for all the occasions when you've lost.</p>	<p>To make up for something that is damaged, lost, or missing means to replace it or compensate for it.</p>	<p>to repay; compensate: Perhaps \$50 will make up for your trouble.</p>
<p><i>make up to</i> trans. unseparable She's always making up to the teacher by</p>	<p>If you make up to someone, you try to get them to like you by being friendly to-</p>	<p>(No entry)</p>

bringing him present.

wards them, usually because you want them to give you something.

*open on to* trans.  
unseparable  
Our front door opens on to the street — we have no front garden.

*open on to*  
If a building or room opens onto another place, you can go straight from one to the other, for example through a door.

(No entry)

*put up with* trans.  
unseparable  
I cannot put up with all this noise.

If you put up with something or someone, you tolerate or accept them, even though you find it difficult or unpleasant.

to tolerate: How can you put up with such intense pain?

*rub off on* trans.  
unseparable  
I guess some of your wisdom rubbed off on me.

If someone else's quality or mood rubs off on you, it affects you and you start to have it or feel it.

to pass along to, as or as if touching: Her talent for biology rubbed off on her daughter.

*send away for* trans.  
unseparable  
meaning  
'by mail/ by post'  
I've sent away for some things that I saw in the catalogue.

If you send away for something, you write to a firm or organization and ask them to send it to you.

to order (goods) to be delivered by mail: sent away for tulip bulbs

*settle up with* trans.  
unseparable

When you settle up with someone, you

to pay (what is owed) such as a bill: You

<p>We shall settle up with the travel agent tommorrow.</p>	<p>pay them what you owe them.</p>	<p>should settle with the bank on your loan.</p>
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<p><i>stick out for</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable British usage The men are sticking out for a five percent pay rise.</p>	<p>If you stick out for something, you keep demanding it until you get it, and do not accept anything different or less than you have asked for.</p>	<p>(No entry)</p>
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<p><i>stick up for</i> (colloq.) trans. unseparable When my father is angry with me, my mother always sticks up for me.</p>	<p>If you stick up for a person, or a belief, you support or defend them, using force if necessary.</p>	<p>to speak in favor of; support</p>
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<p><i>take up with</i> (colloq.) trans. unseprable She has taken up with very strange pepole.</p>	<p>If you take up with someone, you begin to be friendly with them and spend a lot of time with them.</p>	<p>to keep company with: She's taken up with the the wrong crowd of kids.</p>
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<p><i>take down to</i> trans. unseparable Children dislike to be talked down to.</p>	<p>If someone talks down to you, they talk to you in a way that shows that they think that they are more important or more clever than you.</p>	<p>to speak in a superior tone: A good teacher won't talk down to students.</p>
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<p><i>wait up</i> (for) trans. unseparable I'll be late, so don't wait up for me.</p>	<p><i>wait up</i> If you wait up, you deliberately do not go to bed, because</p>	<p><i>wait up</i> [ no obj ] to postpone going to bed in order to await</p>
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you know that someone who lives in the same place as you will be returning home late at night.

someone's arrival.

*walk away with*  
trans. unseparable  
Of course you will win — you'll walk away with all the prizes.

See *walk off with*  
If you walk off with something such as a prize, or walk away with it, you win it, or achieve it very easily.

*walk off* or *walk away with*  
to win, esp. with ease.