Phrasal Verbs: Cause and Effect

VOCABULARY WORKSHEET | 50 QUESTIONS | ANSWER KEY

Learn to explain what causes a change, triggers a reaction, or has a lasting effect. Practise the expressions from our B2-C1 lesson in real situations.

Quick guide: 16 useful expressions

- bring about - cause a change
- result in - produce an outcome
- set off - trigger a sudden reaction
- kick off - begin an event
- take its toll on - cause gradual harm
- mess up - spoil a plan or task
- blow up - grow into major trouble
- calm down - become or make calmer
- lead to - cause a result
- give rise to - cause something new
- spark off - start a debate or reaction
- bring on - cause something unpleasant
- wear down - weaken over time
- backfire - have the opposite effect
- bring down - reduce a level
- ease off - become less intense

Exercise 1. Match expressions and meanings

Write the correct letter (A-J) beside each expression. Each letter is used once.

01. bring about _____
02. set off _____
03. wear down _____
04. backfire _____
05. bring down _____
06. take its toll on _____
07. spark off _____
08. mess up _____
09. ease off _____
10. give rise to _____

A cause harm over a long period
B have an unintended opposite result
C reduce something
D become less strong
E trigger something suddenly
F produce a new situation or problem
G spoil something
H start a discussion or reaction
I cause a change
J make someone weak or exhausted

Complete and Choose

PRACTICE: PARTICLES AND MEANING

Exercise 2. Complete the missing words

Write one missing word in each sentence. Look carefully at the surrounding grammar.

11. The new policy brought _____ improvements to local schools.

12. His sarcastic remark set _____ an argument.

13. The discovery gave rise _____ several questions.

14. The delay resulted _____ higher costs.

15. Constant complaints eventually wore her _____.

16. The coach asked the players to calm _____.

17. These measures should bring _____ energy bills.

18. The rain finally eased _____ in the afternoon.

19. Years of stress have taken their toll _____ his health.

20. Poor communication can lead _____ confusion.

Exercise 3. Choose the better expression

Underline the expression that best completes each sentence.

21. The new timetable (brought about / calmed down) fewer delays.

22. Her comment (set off / brought down) a heated argument.

23. The plan (backfired / eased off) when nobody supported it.

24. After hours of rain, the storm finally (eased off / kicked off).

25. Years of overtime (took their toll on / brought down) his health.

26. She tried to (bring down / set off) her stress levels.

27. The article (sparked off / messed up) a public debate.

28. The referee asked the players to (calm down / result in).

29. The meeting (kicked off / brought on) with a short introduction.

30. The disagreement (blew up / eased off) into a serious dispute.

Build Accurate Sentences

PRACTICE: REWRITING AND REGISTER

Exercise 4. Rewrite using the word given

Use the word in CAPITALS and keep the original meaning. Change its form if needed.

31. The new system caused major changes at work. (BROUGHT)

The new system _____ at work.

32. His remark started a heated argument. (SET)

His remark _____.

33. This decision created several new problems. (RISE)

This decision _____.

34. The long hours gradually exhausted Mia. (WORE)

The long hours _____.

35. The plan had the opposite effect from what we expected. (BACKFIRED)

The plan _____.

36. The error ruined the entire presentation. (MESSED)

The error _____.

37. The stress caused headaches for Owen. (BROUGHT)

The stress _____.

38. The new policy reduced electricity bills. (BROUGHT)

The new policy _____.

39. The disagreement grew into a major conflict. (BLEW)

The disagreement _____.

40. Repeated criticism gradually damaged her confidence. (TOLL)

Repeated criticism _____.

Exam and register tip

For essays and reports, bring about, result in and give rise to are useful neutral or formal choices. Mess up and blow up are more conversational. Choose expressions that suit your reader.

Vocabulary in Context

PRACTICE: TWO SHORT SITUATIONS

Exercise 5. Complete the mini-stories

Choose from each word bank once. Change the verb form where necessary.

BOX A **gave rise to | kicked off | sparked off | brought about | resulted in**

A new community library

41. The reopening event _____ with a short speech.

42. A local article _____ an enthusiastic discussion about reading.

43. Readers' suggestions _____ several new ideas for children's activities.

44. A successful fundraising campaign _____ major improvements to the building.

45. The changes _____ higher visitor numbers.

BOX B **wear down | bring on | backfire | calm down | ease off**

Alex's difficult week at work

46. Repeated complaints from customers _____.

47. The long shifts _____ headaches.

48. His attempt to ignore the complaints _____.

49. A supportive conversation with his manager helped him _____.

50. By the weekend, the pressure finally _____.

Personal practice (optional)

Write 4-5 sentences about a change, its cause and its consequences. Use at least three expressions from the guide.

Answer Key

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS | 50 QUESTIONS

Exercise 1. Matching

01 I 02 E 03 J 04 B 05 C
06 A 07 H 08 G 09 D 10 F

Exercise 2. Missing words

11 about
12 off
13 to
14 in
15 down
16 down
17 down
18 off
19 on
20 to

Exercise 3. Choose the better expression

21 brought about
22 set off
23 backfired
24 eased off
25 took their toll on
26 bring down
27 sparked off
28 calm down
29 kicked off
30 blew up

Exercise 4. Rewriting (model answers)

31 brought about major changes
32 set off a heated argument
33 gave rise to several new problems
34 wore Mia down
35 backfired
36 messed up the entire presentation
37 brought on headaches for Owen
38 brought down electricity bills
39 blew up into a major conflict
40 took its toll on her confidence

Exercise 5. Mini-stories

41 kicked off
42 sparked off
43 gave rise to
44 brought about
45 resulted in
46 wore Alex down
47 brought on
48 backfired
49 calm down
50 eased off

Keep learning

Read the full Cause and Effect lesson on My English Teacher.