

break

verb

/breɪk/

in pieces [intransitive, transitive] to be damaged and separated into two or more parts, as a result of force; to damage something in this way *All the windows broke with the force of the blast.* **break in/into something** *She dropped the plate and it broke into pieces. The boat hit a rock and broke in half. She fell off a ladder and broke her arm.* **break something in/into something** *He broke the chocolate in two.*

stop working [intransitive, transitive] to stop working as a result of being damaged; to damage something and stop it from working **break something** *I think I've broken the washing machine.*

skin [transitive] **break the skin** to cut the surface of the skin and make it bleed *The dog bit me but didn't break the skin.*

law/promise [transitive] **break something** to do something that is against the law; to not keep a promise, etc. *I had broken the law and deserved to be punished. People should not be allowed to break the rules. to break a promise*

stop for short time [intransitive, transitive] to stop doing something for a while, especially when it is time to eat or have a drink **break for something** *Let's break for lunch.* **break something** *Their sleep was broken by noise from the street.*

end something

[transitive] **break something** to interrupt something so that it ends suddenly *She broke the silence by coughing. The phone rang and broke my train of thought.* [transitive] **break something** to end a connection with something or a relationship with somebody *He broke all ties with his parents.*

escape [intransitive] **break free (from somebody/something)** (of a person or an object) to manage to get away from or out of a position in which they have been caught *He finally managed to break free from his attacker.*

destroy, be destroyed [transitive, intransitive] **break (somebody/something)** to destroy something or make somebody/something weaker; to become weak or be destroyed *to break somebody's morale/resistance/resolve/spirit. She broke under questioning (= was no longer able to bear it) and confessed to everything.*

make somebody feel bad [transitive] **break somebody** to make somebody feel so sad, lonely, etc. that they cannot live a normal life *The death of his wife broke him completely.*

SEE ALSO TOPICS [FeelingsC2](#)

of weather [intransitive] to change suddenly, usually after a period when it has been fine *On the third day the weather broke and they had a violent storm.*

of clouds [intransitive] to show an opening *The clouds broke and the sun came out.*

surface break the surface to come up through the surface of water in the sea, a pool, etc. *When his head broke the surface he took in deep gulps of air.*

of day/dawn/storm [intransitive] when the day or dawn or a storm **breaks**, it begins *Dawn was breaking when they finally left.*

SEE ALSO TOPICS [WeatherC1](#)

of news [intransitive] if a piece of news **breaks**, it becomes known **breaking news** (= news that is arriving about events that have just happened) [transitive] **break it/the news to somebody** to be the first to tell somebody some bad news *Who's going to break it to her?*

of voice [intransitive] if somebody's voice **breaks**, it changes its tone because of emotion *Her voice broke as she told us the dreadful news.* [intransitive] when a boy's voice **breaks**, it becomes permanently deeper at about the age of 13 or 14

SEE ALSO TOPICS [Life stagesC2](#)

a record [transitive] **break a record** to do something better, faster, etc. than anyone has ever done it before. *The movie broke all box-office records.*

of waves [intransitive] when waves **break**, they fall and are dissolved into foam, usually near land *the sound of waves breaking on the beach The sea was breaking over the wrecked ship.*

something secret [transitive] **break a code/cipher** to find the meaning of something secret *to break a code*

money [transitive] **break something** to change a banknote for coins *Can you break a twenty-dollar bill?*

Phrasal Verbs

break away

break down

break for

break in

break into

break off

break out

break out in

break through

break up

break with

Idioms containing **break** ----- **break somebody's heart**