

## Verb particles provide slight nuances of meaning

This morning I was thinking about particle verbs, as you sometimes do. I did it because I was in bed upstairs, wondering if I should go *up* or maybe *down*. So *gå ner för trappan* to the kitchen. But *gå upp ur sängen* first.

*Upp* and *ner* are adverbs but also regular verb particles. A verb particle is usually a preposition or an adverb, which together with a verb forms a particle verb. For the particle to be precisely a particle, it must be stressed in the spoken language, as in, for example, *lägga in*, *gå ner* eller *gå upp*.

Verb particles in Swedish often contribute to creating small nuances of meaning. The person that *äter upp* leaves nothing on the plate, while the person that *äter* may only take a few bites.

The verb particle *upp* has a variety of meanings. In the Swedish dictionary, twelve uses are presented. In addition to being used in the sense of "in the opposite direction to the direction of fall", for example *gå upp ur sängen*, *upp* is often used to show that something is starting, for example *ta upp kampen* against drugs. To complicate things a bit, *upp* is also common when we want to signal an end, for example *ge upp hoppet*, or by all means *brinna upp*, which has a slightly different meaning than *brinna ner*.

The verb particle *ner* has fewer meanings than *upp* in Swedish dictionary, including "along the natural direction of fall" and "with destructive effect". *Brinna ner* could then be classified in category number two; *brinna ner* probably gives many people a more physical image of something burning down, than *brinner upp*, which at least to me feels more final and rather focuses on the result.

The verb particle *ner* also seems to be generally used in a more negative sense than up. For example, it sounds a bit unpleasant to *blöta ner* someone, while *blöta upp* something does not have a particularly negative connotation.