

# Verb+ adjective combinations in English and their Croatian counterparts

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Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskoga jezika i  
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## **Abstract**

This paper shows learning difficulties the learners of English phrasal verbs might come across. Non-native speakers have a hard time comprehending multi-word verbs as one unit which makes it more difficult to include them into their personal corpus of the English language, not knowing how to properly use them in a sentence when speaking or writing. It is especially hard for Slavic learners, considering that Slavic languages do not contain multi-word verbs as separate constructions. Furthermore, after adopting them, how to translate multi-word verbs is another obstacle that Croatian learners have to go through, meaning it can be translated in many ways (with one word only, creating a Croatian multi-word verb, or equivalent idiomatic expression), but the translator has to pick the one that captures the meaning as closely as possible. Focusing on verb-adjective combination with the verb *go*, this paper shows one of the ways of translating and analyzing these combinations.

Key words: multi-word verbs, Croatian multi-word verbs, translation, verb-adjective combinations



## **Introduction**

The term phrasal verbs has been used as a synonym to multi-word verbs as it is the most frequent combination of all multi-word verb combinations. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary International Student Edition*, "Phrasal verb is a verb combined with an adverb or preposition or sometimes both to give a new meaning. According to *Longman Dictionary Of Contemporary English*, "Phrasal verb is a group of words that is used like a verb and consists of a verb with an adverb or preposition after it". According to the *American Heritage Dictionary Of the English Language*, "Phrasal verb is an English verb complex consisting of a verb and one or more following particles and acting as a complete syntactic and semantic unit". What this paper is focused on are multi-word-verbs, their translation to Croatian, which, as a language, does not recognize multi-word words as a separate group, and most important, its rarest combination, and that is verb-adjective combination. The paper shall offer the steps one has to go through to eventually be able to translate verb-adjective combinations and numerous ways it can be done in Croatian language in the absence of a single word verb or an equivalent idiomatic expression.

## 1. Learning difficulties

Multi-word verbs are being used by English native speakers on daily basis, thus for non-native speakers of English it is almost crucial to master the subtle art of English multi-word verbs. When literal, multi-word verbs tend to be slightly easier to understand, but still present an uneasy task for English learners to overcome; but when idiomatic or figurative, the speaker or listener needs to be quite conversant with its meaning or its background story (considering how plethora of multi-word verbs often carry a historical or literary connotation). One thing is for certain: learning multi-word verbs verb by verb and memorizing them and their meaning can maybe help you understand what the speaker is saying, but it stops you from using the word yourself and enlisting it to your own vocabulary extent. “One big advantage of this method is that it is thorough and comprehensive. But, the problem with a long list is that it is one thing to memorize a phrasal verb and its meaning, but quite another to bring the phrasal verb into your active, everyday speaking and listening” (Dainty, 1992:2).

### 1.1 Learning methods

To completely master multi-word verbs, understand while listening and use while speaking, the learner has to go through a number of tasks to ensure the engraving into one’s brain. Firstly, using a ‘text/context method’,(Cirocki, 2003:2)that teaches you the meaning of verbs, whether they are transitive or intransitive, separable or inseparable, and through different contexts where you are suppose to recognize them in a short text.

*An Imperfectly Perfect Day*

*When I set off for work this morning, my car broke down, so I ended up taking the bus. As soon as I got off, I bumped into an old schoolmate, Mark. While we were talking, he brought up*

*something I had already found out from some mutual friends- that he had come into some money and had set up his own business. He told me that there was a lot to sort out, and offered to take me on, but I turned him down straight away.* (Jonathan Olliffe, 2016)

Now that the learner has a knowledge of the meaning of newly discovered multi-word verbs, it is time to solidify it and put it in use. In the next task, the learner is to fill in the blanks with the appropriate multi-word verb in its correct form (Cirocki, 2003:3).

1. *I needed to push the lid \_\_\_\_\_ to close the food container. (shut / clean / open)*
2. *My father shook me \_\_\_\_\_ because I had fallen asleep during the movie. (awake / alone / open)*
3. *I cooked the rice \_\_\_\_\_ in an automatic rice cooker. (full / soft / white)*
4. *James polished the silverware \_\_\_\_\_ before the dinner. (bright / closed / broken)*
5. *You can freeze a water bottle \_\_\_\_\_ by putting it in the snow. (warm / flat / solid)*  
(Zwier, 2017:1)

There are two more tasks that ought to help the learner retain the knowledge he or she has just obtained in the previous two tasks and that is writing their own text with the multi-word verbs they have been given (to see if the learner uses them properly in a sentence) and rephrasing sentences with multi-word verbs (Cirocki, 2003:3).

1. *get down to, keep on with, take down, fall behind, put off, get through, catch up with*  
*Dear Paul, I have problems with my studies at school. I find it difficult to get down to work in the afternoons and I can't concentrate on anything right now. I spend most of my time listening to CDs or watching TV instead of doing my homework. The other students in my class are much better than I am and I find it hard to keep up with them. I can't take down the important things my teacher says because I write very slowly. He has told me that I'm falling behind with my lessons* (Cirocki, 2003:4)

2. They have erected a gazebo in their vineyard. (put up)

## 2. Multi-word verbs in Croatian

Multi-word verbs are a commonly acknowledged occurrence in numerous languages such as German, Dutch, French, English and other Germanic languages. However, they are sadly absent from Slavic languages. Some scholars and Croatian linguists even take it as far as specifically noting that multi-word verbs do not exist as such in Croatian language. “Phrasal verbs do not exist in Croatian language” (Geld, 2006:74).

### 2.1 Why they do not exist

Taking into consideration the paper *Arguments for Phrasal Verbs in Croatian and Their Influence on Semantic Relations in Croatian WordNet<sup>1</sup>*, indications of existence of Croatian multi-word verbs are impossible to overlook. The paper states that the main problem of Croatian dictionaries is that they are focused only on the sole meaning of a verb itself. They state as many meanings as that verb has, but entirely ignore the reason for that switch in meaning.

### 2.2 Why they should exist

1. (a) *zagrijati se pod pokrivačem* (to warm up under the blanket)

(b) *zagrijati se od trčanja* (to warm up from running)

2. (a) *zagrijati se za lingvistiku* (to be interested in linguistics)

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<sup>1</sup>Croatian WordNet (CroWN) is a semantic network of Croatian lexis.

(b) *zagrijati se za kuhanje* (to be interested in cooking)

(c) *zagrijati se za Brada Pitta* (lit. to be interested in Brad Pitt; to have the  
hots for Brad Pitt)(Katunar et al. )

The verbs in (1 a, b) contain the basic meaning of that verb (to warm up), and can be followed by various prepositions such as *pod* or *od* without changing the basic meaning stated above. Every meaning of the verb *zagrijati se* is listed in the Croatian online dictionary<sup>2</sup> under the same lemma. What that online dictionary, just like every other Croatian dictionary, fails to do is to explain that the change in meaning in (2 a, b, c) occurs only because of the presence of a Croatian preposition *za*, thus making the dictionary inadequate for any individual foreign users and learners of Croatian language who are in need of a more elaborate explanation of those changes. The change that occurs only in a presence of a particular preposition, in this case *za*, makes this verb a perfect candidate for a Croatian multi-word verb with its own place in a dictionary with its own meanings, synonyms and hyperonyms. Plus, every verb in (1 a, b, and 2 a, b, c) has already been added a prefix *za(grijati se (za))* equivalent to the adverb *up* in *warm up* thanks to the Croatian prefix formation method. Croatian word formation methods should represent an introduction to Croatian multi-word verbs. It is not considered a multi-word verb but simply, what we call in Croatian, a reflexive-possessive verb (*povratno-posvojni glagol*), but it definitely shows a change in meaning, different from regular and most basic verb form *warm-grijati*.

### 3. Verb – adjective combinations

The most uncommon combination of multi-word verbs is the verb – adjective combination. It will be demonstrated with the combinations carried out by the verb *go*, as it is the topic of this

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<sup>2</sup>Hrvatski Jezični Portal - <http://hjp.znanje.hr/>

paper. The verb represents an action that needs to keep unwinding until the object of that action reaches certain typical features appointed by the adjective of that particular verb – adjective combination. For example:

*go adrift – the boat kept on floating without a captain and went adrift*

The verb, in this case –go, is the representative of an action that is been being executed by the object, -boat, of that sentence and can continue endlessly without an adjective, because the adjective, -adrift, is the one that “gets the job done”.<sup>3</sup> It is important to acknowledge the relationship between a verb and its adjective in verb – adjective combinations because the verb leads toward the adjective, until the adjective stops the verb from acting because it has reached its full potential. The boat cannot go more or most adrift, the adjective makes it final. The only way of prolonging that action is by putting the verb of that combination into continuous form.

*The boat is going adrift.*

In the past, it was possible for the adjective to come before the object of the verb – adjective phrase (*go adrift the boat*), but now it is recommended not to use the phrase in that order. It is grammatically correct, but it is always considered to be old-fashioned, and is definitely out of use today.

#### **4. Translating multi-word verbs**

“The lexical syntactic and semantic idiosyncrasies of multi-word expressions are at the root of translation problems” (Baldwin & Kim, 2010:267). Multi-word verbs may consist of a verb and an adverb particle, verb and a preposition, a combination of all three; verb, an adverb particle

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.cambridge.org/grammarandbeyond/grammar-practice-activities/2017/06/verb-adjective-combinations>

and a preposition, or, in the case of this paper, a verb and an adjective. Translating multi-word verb can present a serious problem for the translator trying to find translation that would wholesomely depict the meaning of a specific multi-word verb, especially in languages like Croatian that do not contain, or, at least, do not recognize multi-word verbs as a separate part of that language's corpus. Also, what is in English a combination of two or more words can in Croatian, in the absence of an equivalent idiomatic expression, be translated with only one word.

#### **4.1 Translating obstacles**

The verb itself, without its other components, is translated differently than the whole multi-word unit. One cannot translate a multi-word verb by translating word by word because the meaning of the multi-word verb often has nothing to do with its verb part, thus making the meaning unpredictable. For example:

*call round*

*call - to give someone or something a name*

*- to use a phone to talk to someone etc.*

*round - in a circular direction or position*

*call round –visit*

Another problem is that some multi-word verbs are polysemous, having more than one meaning, or can be used idiomatically so it is up to translator to recognize the right meaning from the context of the sentence.

## 4.2 Translating verb – adjective combinations

It is somewhat different with translating verb-adjective combinations. It is easier to recognize and guess the meaning of multi-word combinations with adjectives because the adjective denotes what has happened, or is going to happen.

*go – to move, to leave etc.*

*amok – uncontrolled*

*go            amok            -            to behave or run around in a wild, unruly, out-of-control manner; to be or become crazy or chaotic*

The verb *go* can almost be observed as an auxiliary verb being only an introduction to an action that is being presented by an adjective that explains what is actually happening. What is important is to understand the contexts of a complete sentence before translating it. “Translation is neither a work on language nor on words but a work on the message and meaning. The translator should first of all understand the message before rendering it in another language” (Oluchukwu, 2015:10).



## 5. Translating methods of verb-adjective combinations with the verb *go*

There are twenty three units included in this research. They are extracted from the *Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*<sup>4</sup> being the main source of our verb-adjective combinations with the verb *go*, as well as our example sentences illustrating the meaning of the verbs presented.

### 5.1 Prefixation

#### 1. go adrift –dynamic verb + adjective

1.1.1. (usually of a boat) to become free of its fastenings and float away without

control: *The boat has gone adrift and there's no one on board!*

*Brod je odplovio i nema nikoga na njemu.*

translation: odploviti

#### 2. go amok/amuck (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

2.1.1. dated, to rush around in a violent, murderous frenzy. (Note: This is the phrase's original specific meaning, taken from Malay. "Amok" also has an older alternative spelling, "amuck.")

*Fueled by alcohol and cocaine, Dave went amok when his wife told him she'd been seeing someone else.*

*Pod gasom od alkohola i kokaina, Dave je poludio kada mu je žena rekla da se viđa s nekim drugim.*

translation: poludjeti

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<sup>4</sup>*Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs* by Rosemary Courtney. 1983

3. go ape (idiomatic)– verb + adjective

3.1.1. AmE informal; to become mad or very keen: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *Have you heard about Bill? He's gone ape over that*

*new girl in the office!*

*Jesi li čula za Billa? Pomahnitao je za novom zaposlenicom u uredu.*

translation: pomahnitati (za nekim, nečim)

4. go bad – verb + adjective ► go off

4.1.1. to turn sour or start to decay: (a linking verb with a complement that represents the subject + adverbial “bad”) *Don't drink this milk, it's gone bad.*

*Nemoj piti to mlijeko, pokvarilo se.*

translation: pokvariti se

5. go berserk (idiomatic) – verb + adjective ► drive crazy, drive mad, drive out, send berserk

5.1.1. to become wild or out of control: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *The goats have gone berserk; they broke down the fence and now they are eating all the washing on the line in the garden next door!*

*Koze su podivljale; probile su ogradu i sada jedu sav oprani veš sa štrika u susjednom dvorištu!*

translation: podivljati

Synonym of go ape, go mad, go crazy etc.

6. go mad – verb + adjective

6.1.1. to lose one's senses or one's mind: (a linking verb with a complement that represents the subject + adverbial “mad”) *It's very sad his wife went mad and had to be locked up in a special hospital.*

*Jako je tužno što mu je žena poludjela i što je morala biti zatvorena u instituciju.*

translation: poludjeti

Synonym of go berserk, crazy etc. but carrying more of a medical connotation (hinting psychological illness)

7. go dry (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

7.1.1. (of cows) to be unable to give milk: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *The farmers think that their cattle have a disease, because the cows have gone dry.*

*Farmeri misle da im se stoka razboljela jer su krave presušile.*

translation: presušiti, ostati bez mlijeka

With prefixes these verbs become, what is in Croatian called, finished verbs (svršeni glagoli) meaning that the action had partially or fully been finished. The prefix itself, if watched separately, would apply to the verb part of the combination (**go mad-poludjeti**, mad meaning lud, and go denoting an action)

## 5.2 Equivalent idiomatic expression

1 go broke (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

1.1 \*go bankrupt

1.1.1 go for broke, informal, to use every possible effort, especially to win: *Jim intends to go for broke in the next race, even though the effort may kill him.*

*Jim planira pobijediti svim silama, iako bi ga to moglo ubiti.*

translation: svim silama, iz petnih žila (pobijediti)

Adding a preposition *for* changed the meaning of an adjective *broke*. *For* denotes purpose, and in this case the purpose would be to give your best, or lose trying and become “broke”.

2. go blank – verb + adjective

2.1.1. (of one's mind) to be emptied of thoughts: (a linking verb with a complement that represents the subject + adverbial "blank" (usually simple tenses)) *Try to let your mind go blank, then you will feel calmer.*

*Pokušaj da ti um postane prazna ploča, tada ćeš se osjećati opuštenije.*

translation: biti, postati prazna ploča

3. go Dutch (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

3.1.1. informal, to share cost, as of a meal: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything (with)) *Many women these days would rather go Dutch to show their independence, than be paid for by a man.*

*Mnogo žena u današnje vrijeme bi radije račun platile pola pola nego da im ih plaća muškarac, i tako pokazale svoju neovisnost.*

translation: platiti pola pola, fifti fifti, lapo lapo (localism)

Going Dutch has a historical background; “ the phrase *going Dutch* originates from the concept of a Dutch door, with an upper and lower half that can be opened independently” (Oxford English Dictionary)

4. go short (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

4.1.1. informal, to lack (something); not have enough: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything (of)) *If there isn't enough milk for everyone, someone will just have to go short.*

*Ako ne bude dovoljno za sve, netko će jednostavno morati ostati kratak za mlijeko.*

translation: biti kratak (za nešto)

### 5.3 Description

When in need of proper portrayal of the meaning of the combination, but cannot find a right Croatian equivalent, one can use description as a translating tool.

### 5.3.1 With verb-adjective combinations in Croatian

1 go bust (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

1.1 \*go bankrupt

translation: biti švorc

*Go broke, go bust* are synonyms meaning encountering failure and losing all your money.

2. go begging (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

2.1.1. informal, to be unwanted: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything (usually continuous tenses)) *If those two cakes are going begging, I'll have them!*

*Ako će ona dva kolača ostati neiskorištena, ja ću ih pojesti!*

translation: ostati neiskorišten

3. go unheard – verb + adjective

3.1.1. to fail to be heard: (a linking verb with a complement that represents the subject + adverbial “unheard”) *From the bottom of the well, the cat's faint cries for help went unheard.*

*S dna bunara, mačkini nejasni vapaji bili su nečuvani.*

translation: biti nečuvan

3.1.2. idiomatic, to be paid no attention: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *The man's request for correct medical treatment went unheard by the people in charge.*

*Čovjekov zahtjev za pravilnim medicinskim tretmanom je bio zanemaren od strane vodećih ljudi.*

translation: biti zanemaren

4. go straight (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

4.1.1. informal, to live honestly after one has been a criminal: (an intransitive verb with

no object; not followed by anything) *After three years in prison, the former jewel thief decided to go straight, and took a job within a building firm.*

*Nakon tri godine provedene u zatvoru, bivši kradljivac nakita je odlučio postati čestit i prihvatio je posao u građevinskoj tvrtci.*

translation: postati čestit

### 5.3.2 With verb-object combinations

1 go scot-free (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

1.1.1 informal, to escape punishment: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by

anything (usually simple tenses)) *Both the men went to prison, but the boys went scot-free on account of their age.*

*Oba muškarca su otišli u zatvor, a dečki su izbjegli kaznu na osnovu njihovih godina.*

translation: izbjеći kaznu

2. go native (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

2.1.1. informal, especially BrE, to live by choice in the manner of the (often conquered)

people of a place far from civilization: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *Some continue to dress for dinner as if they were still in England; others go native, wear the local clothes and eat the native foods, and generally behave like uncivilized men.*

*Neki se nastave odjevati za večere kao da su još uvijek u Engleskoj dok neki prihvate običaje i nose lokalnu odjeću, jedu lokalnu hranu i ponašaju se kao necivilizirani ljudi.*

translation: prihvatiti običaje

### 5.3.3 With verb-adverb combinations

1 go right – verb + adjective

1.1.1 to work correctly; result as one planned or wished, etc.: (a linking verb with a complement that represents the subject + adverbial “right”) *That washing machine hasn't gone right since I bought it; I shall complain to the makers.*

*Ta perilica rublja ne radi ispravno otkad sam je kupio, žaliti ću se proizvođaču.*

translation: raditi ispravno, šljakati (colloquialism, not in the sense of being at work, but in the sense of functioning properly)

2. go wrong – verb + adjective

2.1.1. to fail to work correctly or as one planned or wished: (a linking verb with a complement that represents the subject + adverbial “wrong”) *If that washing machine goes wrong again, I shall complain to the makers.*

*Ako ta perilica rublja bude samo još jednom radila neispravno, žaliti ću se proizvođaču.*

translation: raditi neispravno

3. go haywire (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

3.1.1. informal, to go wildly wrong: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *I had arranged to do the shopping when we got back from our holiday, but my plans went haywire when the train was three hours late.*

*Bio sam organizirao kupovinu nakon povratka s godišnjeg odmora, ali su moji planovi krenuli naopako kada je vlak kasnio tri sata.*

translation: krenuti naopako

Synonym with *go amuck*.

### 5.3.4 Three or more words description

1. go amok/amuck – verb + adjective

1.1.1 to behave or run around in a wild, unruly, out-of-control manner; to be or become crazy or chaotic:

*We tried to have some organized games for the kids, but they all started going amok as soon as they got here.*

*Pokušali smo provesti program s igranjem igara, ali su djeca počela trčati kao pomahnitala čim su došla.*

translation: trčati kao pomahnitao

One can also use comparison to demonstrate the true meaning of the verb.

2. go sick (idiomatic) – verb + adjective fall sick, report sick, take sick

2.1.1. informal, to declare oneself unfit for work or duties, not necessarily through illness: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *300 railway men have refused to work, and 150 others have gone sick; many trains will not run today.*

*300 radnika HŽ-a su odbili raditi, a još ih je 150 otišlo na bolovanje; puno vlakova danas neće voziti.*

translation: otići na bolovanje (zbog bolesti, ozljede)

3. go steady (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

3.1.1. (usually of a man and woman) to have a regular social or sexual relationship, often with an intent to marry: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *Jon and Mary have been going steady for a year now; are they going to get married?*

*Jon i Mary su u vezi već godinu dana; hoće li se oženiti?*

translation: biti u vezi (veza između dvije osobe), hodati (colloquialism)

4. go wrong – verb + adjective



4.1.1. to take the wrong road when travelling: (a linking verb with a complement that represents the subject + adverbial “wrong”(usually simple tenses)) *We must have gone wrong somewhere, we should have reached the village by now.*

*Sigurno smo skrenuli s puta jer smo već trebali stići u selo.*

translation: skrenuti s puta

### 5.3.5 With metaphor

1. go wrong – verb + adjective

1. idiomatic, to live immorally: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *She used to be such a nice girl until she went wrong; now there's little hope for her.*

*Bila je tako dobra djevojka dok nije skrenula s puta; sada nema puo nade za nju.*

translation: skrenuti s puta (idiomatically, make bad choices in life)

2. go bankrupt (idiomatic) – verb + adjective

2.1.1. to declare oneself or one's business to be unable to pay debts: (an intransitive verb with no object; not followed by anything) *If trade does not improve soon, the firm may go bankrupt, and then all the workers will be out of a job.*

*Ako se prodaja uskoro ne poboljša, tvrtki će odzvoniti i svi radnici će ostati bez posla.*

translation: odznoviti

## Conclusion

English multi-word verbs bestow a peculiarly difficult task on the learners and translators of the English language. It is a test of both, knowledge and creativity, of a person whose task is to grasp the meaning behind multi-word verbs. To Croatian translators it represents an even more difficult task on the account of Croatian language not having multi-word verbs (ie. not

acknowledging their existence in the Croatian language corpus). The path that a learner of English has to take to be able to adequately translate multi-word verbs is long. Firstly, he has to acquire the knowledge of multi-word verbs going through numerous tasks systematically designed to make the learner able to use them to their fullest potential. Secondly, the learner has to, using all his knowledge, find a perfect Croatian equivalent to the multi-word verb given in the text. Verb-adjective combinations are less demanding to translate because the two components, verb and his adjective, lead the translator to its meaning. The verb picturing an action and its adjective describing the means of that action, as can be seen in examples with the verb *go*. The translation to Croatian can be accomplished by one word equivalent, adding prefix to a verb, as it is the case with the verbs *go adrift/odploviti*, *go ape/pomahnitati*, *go bad/pokvariti se*, *go berserk/podivljati*, *go mad/poludjeti*, and *go dry/presušiti*. The prefixes have a role of creating, what is in Croatian called, a perfective verb denoting that at some point in time the action of the combination has to end, showing characteristics of the adjective in the combination. We can translate using description in the shape of a metaphor (*go bankrupt/odzvoniti*), a verb-adjective combinations in Croatian (*go unheard/biti zanemaren*), a verb followed by an adverb (*go right/raditi ispravno*), a verb followed by a noun object (*go scot-free/izbjeći kaznu*), or, in the absence of a better way, with a three or more words unit (*go sick/otići na bolovanje*). When we have a case of an idiomatic expression, the happiest solution would be to find, if there is one, an equivalent idiomatic expression in Croatian (*go blank/biti prazna ploča*).

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