



Prepositions: Definition, Types, and Examples



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PARTS OF SPEECH

A Guide to Prepositions

- **Prepositions** are parts of speech that show relationships between words in a sentence. In “the book **on** the table,” the preposition *on* shows the relationship between the *book* and the *table*.
- They often indicate where (“She walked **through** the park”), when (“We met **at** noon”), why (“He succeeded **because of** hard work”), or how something happens (“She completed the task **with** ease”).
- While some believe that ending a sentence with a preposition is incorrect, it is not actually a grammatical error.
- Many words and phrases require specific prepositions, so understanding their correct usage is essential for clear and natural communication. For example, we say “interested **in**” (not “interested **on**”).
- Prepositions play a key role in phrasal verbs and collocations, where changing the preposition can alter the meaning of a phrase entirely. For example, “look **up**” (search for information) and “look **after**” (take care of) have very different meanings.



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different types of prepositions, and how to use them effectively in writing and speech.



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What is a preposition?

Prepositions are small words that describe relationships with other words in a sentence, such as where something took place (“**in** a park) or when (“**at** noon”).

Prepositions combine with other words to form a [prepositional phrase](#).

- Preposition: *to*
- Prepositional phrase: *to the moon*

These prepositional phrases can describe [nouns](#) (“the **cat on** the shelf”) or [verbs](#) (“**run through** the grass”). Although you can place prepositional phrases in different places, it’s best to **put them close to the word they describe**.

Each prepositional phrase must contain a noun, known as the [object of a preposition](#). The prepositional phrase often includes a [determiner](#) with the object, like the [articles](#) *the*, *a*, or *an*. Sometimes, the object also has its own [adjective](#), like “on the wooden table.”



Prepositions		
Common Prepositions of Place	Common Prepositions of Time	Common Prepositions of Direction/Movement
Indicate where something is or happens	Specify when something occurs	Show direction or movement from one place to another
above across against around at behind below between in on	after around at before by during for in on since	across along around down into onto out of over through toward
<i>The park is located between the library and the school.</i>	<i>We stayed indoors during the storm.</i>	<i>The car drove through the tunnel.</i>



List of prepositions

Below is a list of commonly used prepositions, organized alphabetically:

A: aboard, about, above, absent, across, after, against, along, alongside, amid (or “amidst”), among (or “amongst”), around, as, at, atop

B: bar (or “barring”), before, behind, below, beneath, beside (or “besides”), between, beyond, but, by

C: circa, concerning, counting

D: despite, down, during

E: effective, except (or “excepting”), excluding

F: failing, following, for, from

I: in, including, inside, into

L: less, like

M: minus

N: near, next, notwithstanding

O: of, off, on, onto, opposite, out, outside, over

P: past, pending, per, plus

R: regarding, respecting

S: short, since

T: than, through, throughout, to, toward (or “towards”)

U: under, underneath, unlike, until, up, upon

V: versus (or “vs.”), via

W: wanting, with, within, without, worth



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check your [grammar](#) and [punctuation](#) to ensure you're using prepositions correctly in your [writing](#).

Types of prepositions

People categorize prepositions in different ways, and there is no official grouping. However, the most common prepositions fit into four main categories, with a fifth category for additional types. Keep in mind that a preposition can have more than one meaning, and sometimes, the same preposition belongs to more than one type.

Here are the main types of prepositions.

Prepositions of place

Prepositions of place show where something is or where something happened. The objects of prepositions of place can refer to a specific location or describe a location in relation to another thing, such as “under the table.”

Example They’re building an amusement park **near** my apartment.

Example Today I’m cleaning the dust **above** the refrigerator.

Example The health food is **between** the snacks and the sodas.

Example I have a sandwich **in** my bag.

Example Meet me **at** the restaurant.

Prepositions of time

Prepositions of time show when something happened or will happen (and sometimes its duration). They always describe verbs, such as when the verb’s action occurs.

Example We have to be ready **at** 5:00 pm.

Example Don’t eat **before** bedtime.

Example I suddenly get energy **after** the sun sets.

Example Our teacher fell asleep **during** recess.

Example Your homework is due **by** Monday.

Prepositions of direction or movement

Prepositions of direction or movement show how something is moving or which way it’s going. For example, in the sentence “The dog ran in a circle,” the prepositional phrase “in a circle” describes how it ran instead of where it ran. These prepositions are usually used with verbs of motion.

Example The defense recovered the fumble and ran **across** the entire field.



Example It's easier to go **through** the woods than **around** the woods.

Example He shot the basketball **over** his opponent's head.

Prepositions of manner, cause, or purpose

Prepositions of manner, cause, or purpose show how or why something happens, such as describing the way or the reasons something occurred. This includes descriptions of feelings or opinions, as well as comparisons.

Example When I'm late my dad takes me to school **by** car.

Example She drives **like** a maniac.

Example He only competes **for** honor, not money.

Example Everyone was eating **in** silence.

Example Ava reads **with** difficulty if she isn't wearing her glasses.

Additional types of prepositions

Prepositions can show many other relationships, but they're not as common as the four types of prepositions above. Let's look at some other, less common types of prepositions you can use.

Prepositions of possession show ownership or describe a trait someone possesses. The most common preposition of possession is *of*, but *with* can also be used to describe a distinguishing trait.

Example The tree **of** our neighbor drops fruit in our yard.

Example I'm going to adopt the dog **with** black spots.

Prepositions of source explain where something came from or who created it, typically using *from* or *by*.

Example The message is **from** outer space!

Example That hole was made **by** a mouse.

Prepositions of measurement refer specifically to quantities and amounts, usually with units of measurement. The most common are *by* and *of*. Likewise, fractions and percentages use the preposition *of* when describing what they're part of.

Example Start the recipe with a cup **of** flour.

Example The boardwalk sells taffy **by** the yard!

Example More than 59% **of** the world's population lives in Asia.

Ending a sentence with a preposition



sentence with a preposition is perfectly fine. Writers who insist that a preposition can't end a sentence often end up with stilted and unnatural-sounding sentences:

- Example There's no one else to hide **behind**. (Correct and natural)
- Example There's no one else **behind** whom to hide. (Correct but unnatural)
- Example Where did you come **from**? (Correct and natural)
- Example **From** where did you come? (Correct but unnatural)

That said, it is sometimes more elegant to move a preposition to an earlier spot in a sentence, especially in very serious and [formal writing](#). But if you do move the preposition, remember to delete it from the end.

- Correct This is something we must meditate **on**.
- Correct This is something **on** which we must meditate.
- Incorrect This is something **on** which we must meditate **on**.

Unnecessary prepositions

One of the most common preposition mistakes is adding an unnecessary *at* to the end of a [question](#).

- Incorrect Where is your brother **at**?

Although this is common in some English dialects, it's considered nonstandard in writing. You can fix the problem by simply deleting the *at*.

- Correct Where is your brother?

If you're not sure which preposition to use, sometimes you can just get rid of it altogether. In fact, you should always eliminate unnecessary prepositional phrases, as too many can be a sign of unfocused writing.

Look at how many prepositions appear in the sentence below:

- Example **For** many people, the reality **of** an entry **into** a new area **of** employment is cause **for** a host **of** anxieties.

Getting rid of the prepositions forces you to tighten up the sentence. The result is shorter, more direct, and easier to understand:

- Example Changing careers makes many people anxious.

Here's another example:

- Example Alex hit the baseball **up over** the fence.

Remove the *up*. You don't need it:

- Example Alex hit the baseball **over** the fence.



Sometimes, prepositions are combined with other parts of speech to form phrases with entirely new meanings. These phrases don't act like prepositional phrases, and they take on different functions and usages in a sentence.

Prepositions in phrasal verbs

A **phrasal verb** is a group of words that together act as a single verb with a unique meaning. For example, the phrasal verb *go out* has a different meaning than the words *go* and *out*. Often, phrasal verbs combine an existing verb with a preposition.

If you're new to prepositions, pay close attention to phrasal verbs. While some prepositions can be interchangeable in general use, the meaning of a phrasal verb always depends on a specific preposition. Changing the preposition can completely alter the meaning of the phrase.

For example, the prepositions *on* and *over* can sometimes mean the same thing, such as *on the stove* and *over the stove*. But the phrasal verbs *come on* and *come over* have very different meanings. When using phrasal verbs, make sure you're using the correct preposition and treat each verb as its own word.

Collocation

In linguistics, **collocation** is just a fancy word to describe words that are commonly used together. In English, we have certain phrases or ways of talking that use specific prepositions; even if a different preposition has the same meaning, it would sound weird to use it.

Prepositional collocations can be tricky for people whose first language isn't English and even for those who have spoken English their entire lives. Here are a few common phrases in English that use specific prepositions.

- at last
- at once
- by chance
- by mistake
- charge for
- comment on
- commit to
- focus on
- for a change
- for example
- in advance
- in common



• in particular

- insist on
- interest in
- memory of
- on purpose
- on time
- out of reach
- preference for
- protect from
- responsible for
- subscribe to
- without fail

Prepositions FAQs

What are prepositions?

Prepositions are small words that describe relationships with other words in a sentence, such as where something took place (*in a park*) or when (*at noon*).

Prepositions can be combined with other words to form a prepositional phrase.

What are the types of prepositions?

People categorize prepositions in different ways, but the most common types are:

- Prepositions of time
- Prepositions of place
- Prepositions of direction or movement
- Prepositions of manner, cause, or purpose

Less common but still relevant are prepositions of possession, prepositions of source, and prepositions of measurement.

What are some preposition examples?

- Prepositions of place include *above, at, besides, between, in, near, on, and under*.
- Prepositions of time include *after, at, before, by, during, in, on, and until*.
- Prepositions of direction or movement include *across, around, into, onto, over, through, to, and toward (towards)*.

Can you end a sentence with a preposition?

Yes! In fact, sometimes it’s better to end a sentence with a preposition than to rearrange all the words. The idea that this is a mistake is a myth.









Are prepositions capitalized in titles?

While different style guides have different rules for capitalization in titles, most generally agree that short prepositions in titles should be lowercase unless they are the first or last word. For example, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *Lord of the Flies* are both correct.

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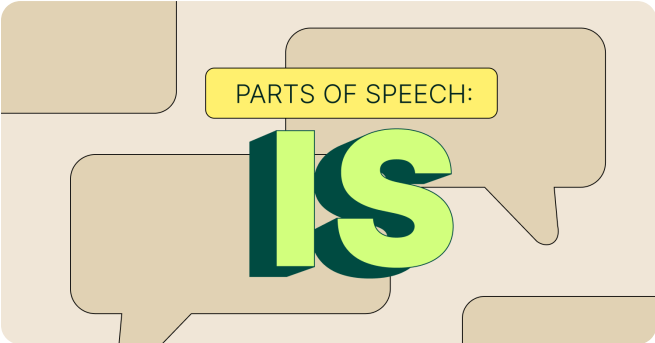
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What Part of Speech Is “Into”?



Parts of Speech

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