

## Prepositions

### 1. The basic prepositions of LOCATION and MOVEMENT

It is important to understand the basic uses of the three prepositions *at*, *on* and *in* to refer to location. These uses depend on the way we view the dimensionality of the location and are summarized in Table 1:

PREPOSITION	DIMENSION	EXAMPLE
AT	0	at the door
		at Grunge Studios
		at the station
ON	1	on a line
	2	on the floor
IN	2 (enclosed)	in the garden
	3	in the box

Table 1.

It is useful to subdivide the uses of each of these basic prepositions, for example there are different reasons for considering a location as having no dimensions. These are summarized in Table 2.

TYPE OF 0-DIMENSIONS	EXAMPLES
DIMENSIONALITY IS INAPPROPRIATE	at the bus-stop
	at the door
DIMENSIONALTY IS UNSPECIFIED	at the station
	at the airport
DIMENSIONALITY IS UNIMPORTANT	at Grunge Studios
	at his/her office

Table 2.

The different uses of *on* can also be classified. Notice that, we use *on* to refer to means of public transport, except taxis, when they are used for their typical purposes:

*I met him on the train.*

*There were 39 passengers trapped in the train.*

The basic uses of *on* are shown in Table 3:

USE	EXAMPLES
1-dimension	on my way to work
	on the coast
	on the river Cam
2-dimensions normal	on the table
	on the floor
	on the shelf
2-dimensions object	on the disk
	on the record
	on the screen
public transport	on the bus
	on the plane
	on the train

Table 3.

Finally the basic uses of *in* are shown in Table 4:

DIMENSION	EXAMPLE
2-dimensions (enclosed)	in the garden
	in a field
	in the mirror
3-dimensions	in the drawer
	in the house
	in London
	in the South of England
	in Cuba

Table 4.

These three basic prepositions of place are associated with prepositions and adverbs indicating positive and negative movement as shown in Table 5. The prepositions are usually formed by the adverb and the word enclosed in square brackets:

*He walked away* vs. *He walked away from the bus stop*.

The prepositions *into* and *onto* are sometimes reduced to *in* and *on*:

*He put the money in(to) his pocket.*  
*They got on(to) the bus.*

PLACE PREP.	+ MOVEMENT	- MOVEMENT
AT	TO	AWAY [FROM]
ON	ON([TO])	OFF
IN	IN([TO])	OUT [OF]

Table 5.

## 2. The basic prepositions of TIME

**AT:** "at" is basically used to introduce points of time, mainly clock time, in the expressions *at night*, *at the weekend* and with public holidays:

*We'll meet at half past six then.*  
*I was woken up at midnight by an explosion.*  
*There's nothing interesting going on at the moment.*  
*I always sleep in at the weekend.*  
*I won't be here at Easter.*  
*I often work at night.*

**ON:** the preposition "on" is basically used for days and dates:

*I'll see you on Saturday.*  
*The meeting's on the first of July.*

We also use "on" if we mention the day and the part of the day:

*I'll be seeing her on Friday evening.*  
*We're going shopping on Saturday afternoon.*  
*We're going out on Friday night.*

**IN:** "in" is used with parts of the day and with periods longer than a day:

*I'll do that in the morning.*  
*We could go for a walk in the afternoon.*  
*We'll be off in August.*  
*It was fashionable in the (early/mid-/late) sixties.*  
*He must be in his (early/mid-/late) twenties.*

**Ø:** It is obligatory to omit the preposition before deictic time words, *last*, *next*, *this*:

*I'll be seeing him next Saturday.*  
*We're having a party this weekend.*  
*I was in London last week.*  
*We didn't go on holiday that year.*