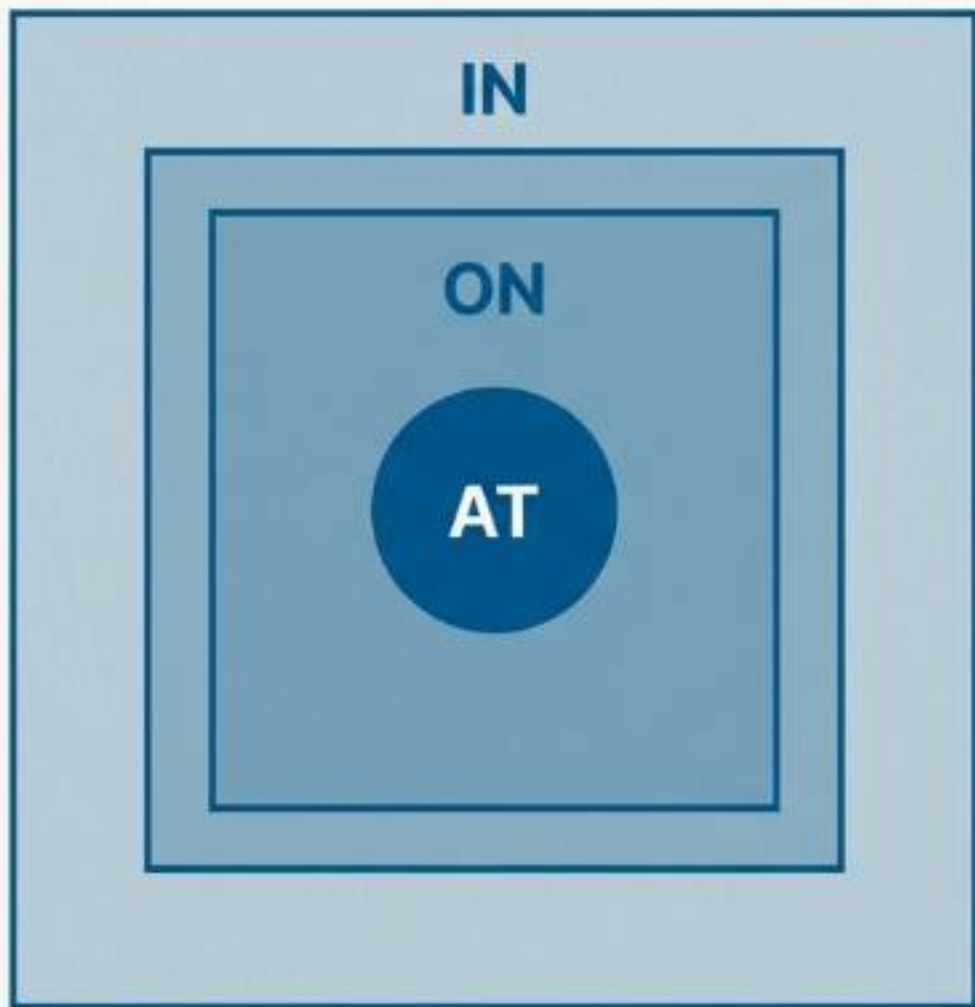# Mastering Time: A Guide to Precision with Prepositions

From General to Precise: A New Framework for Time

Prepositions of time are not random rules to be memorized. They are tools for defining precision. This guide presents an intuitive framework, taking you on a journey from the largest blocks of time down to the most specific moments.

This system will allow you to choose the right word, every time, with confidence.

Use `IN` for large, non-specific containers of time.

- **Years:** The company was founded **in** 2025.
- **Seasons:** We expect to launch the product **in** the winter.
- **Months:** The quarterly reports are due **in** August.
- **Parts of the Day:** The team holds its creative session **in** the morning.
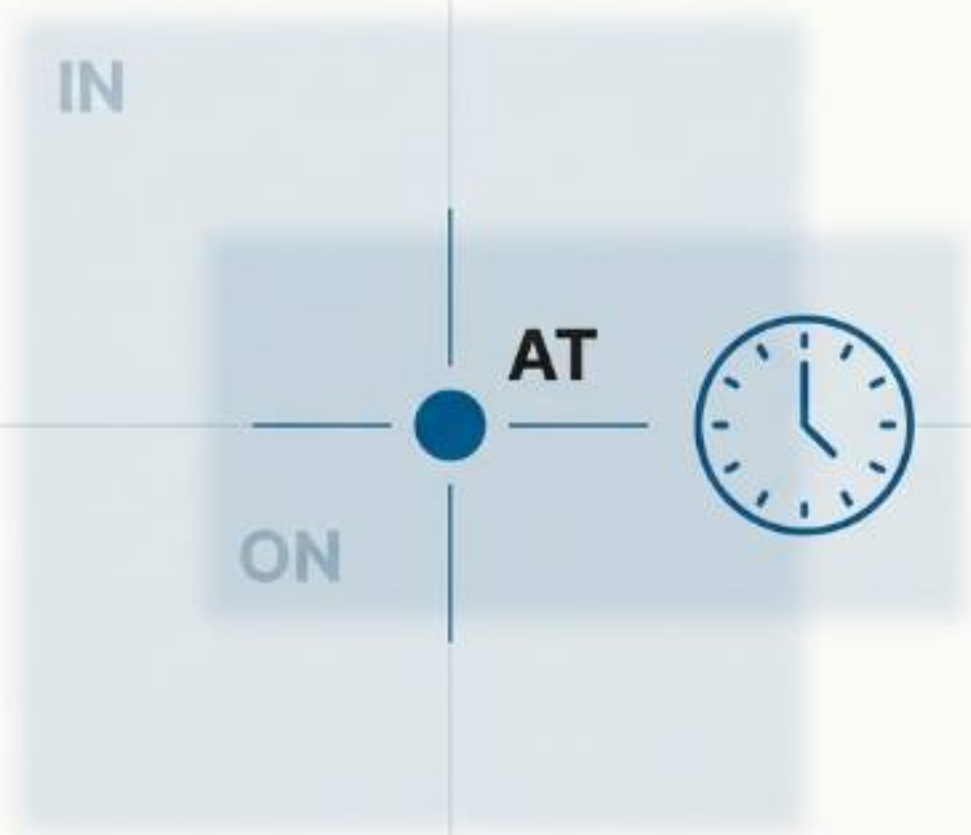
Use `ON` for specific days and dates.

- **Days of the Week:** The weekly sync is scheduled **on** Monday.
- **Specific Dates:** Your contract was signed **on** 12 July.
- **Special Days:** The entire team gets a holiday **on** my birthday.

Use `AT` for precise, specific points in time.

- **Clock Times**: The webinar begins **at** 7 o'clock sharp.

- **Exact Moments**: All systems perform a data backup **at** midnight.

The Pyramid of Precision

AT
Clock Times

ON
Days, Dates

IN
Years, Seasons, Months

Think of time as a set of containers. `IN` is the largest box.
`ON` is a specific location inside that box. `AT` is the exact point.

Use `BEFORE` and `AFTER` to place events in sequence relative to a reference point.

Reference Event

BEFORE (Earlier than)

Please submit the documentation **before** the meeting.

All approvals must be secured **before** lunch.

AFTER (Later than)

We will hold a debrief session **after** the client call.

The team is free to leave **after** school concludes for the holidays.

NotebookLM

Use `DURING` to specify that an action happens within a named period of time.

Rule: To indicate something happening in the middle of a specific period.

The project's discovery phase

Three key risks identified

"Please hold all questions **during** the lesson."

"We identified three key risks **during** the project's discovery phase."

Measuring Time: A Span vs. A Starting Point

FOR (Measuring a Duration)

Use `FOR` to describe a total length or quantity of time.

Two Hours

He managed the team **for** two hours during the outage.

SINCE (Marking a Start)

Use `SINCE` to reference the starting point of a period that continues to the present.

2020   **Now**

The company has been profitable **since** 2020.

NotebookLM

Setting Boundaries:
A Final Deadline vs. A Continuing Action

"'BY" (A Deadline)

Use `BY` to set a final deadline for a single action (not later than).

The report must be on my desk **by** tomorrow.

"UNTIL" / TILL (A Duration Limit)

Use `UNTIL` to describe a continuous state or action that stops at a certain time.

You have **until** 5 p.m. to finish the revisions.

Deadline

Deadline