

PREPOSITION

What is a preposition?

A preposition is a word used to link nouns, pronouns, or phrases to other words within a sentence. Prepositions are usually short words, and they are normally placed directly in front of nouns. In some cases, you'll find prepositions in front of gerund verbs.

There are two very important rules to remember when using prepositions. Because they are somewhat vague, learning about prepositions and using them correctly in sentences takes practice. Because 1:1 translation is often impossible when dealing with prepositions, even the most advanced English students have some difficulty at first.

The first rule is that certain prepositions must be used to make the relationships between words in a sentence clear. Most prepositions are interchangeable but only to a certain extent.

The second rule for using prepositions is that these words must be followed by nouns.

EXAMPLES OF PREPOSITIONS

In the following sentences, examples of prepositions have been italicized. As you read, consider how using different prepositions or even different types of prepositions in place of the examples might change the relationship between the rest of the words in the sentence.

I prefer to read *in* the library.

He climbed *up* the ladder to get *into* the attic.

Please sign your name on the dotted line *after* you read the contract.

Go down the stairs and *through* the door.

He swam *across* the pool.

Take your brother *with* you.

ARTICLES.

An article is a kind of adjective which is always used with and gives some information about a noun. There are only two articles a and the, but they are used very often and are important for using English accurately.

The word a (which becomes an when the next word begins with a vowel - a, e, i, o, u) is called the indefinite article because the noun it goes with is indefinite or general. The meaning of the article a is similar to the number one, but one is stronger and gives more emphasis. It is possible to say I have a book or I have one book, but the second sentence emphasizes that I do not have two or three or some other number of books.

Indefinite article (a/an)

If the noun is singular and countable, and this is the first time you have mentioned it, then you will usually need the indefinite article:

I bought a book – we do not know which book.

There is a bird outside – we do not know anything about the bird.

Measurements and rates also take the indefinite article: Three times a week

If the noun starts with a vowel sound, then the article an is used: an ear, an uncle, an hour

If the noun starts with a consonant sound, then the article a is used: a school, a university

Definite article (the)

If your reader or listener understands what you are referring to, then you will usually need the

definite article:

I bought a book last week. The book is about trees.

(You have just mentioned the book, so you both know which one.)

We went to a wedding yesterday. The bride wore a lovely dress. (You have not mentioned the bride before, but you both know she is connected to the wedding)