

at

S1 W1

/ət; strong æt/

preposition

- 1** PLACE Used to say exactly where something or someone is, or where something happens:

*They live at 18 Victoria Street.*

*Does this train stop at Preston?*

*I was waiting at the bus stop.*

*Liz and her friend sat down at a corner table.*

*Turn left at the church.*

*We'll meet at Harry's (= at Harry's house) .*

*I spent an unpleasant hour at the dentist's.*

*Dad's at work (= in the place where he works) .*

**at the top/bottom/end etc (of something)**

*At the top of the stairs, she paused.*

- 2** GO TO/ATTEND Used to say what event or activity someone is taking part in:

*I met my wife at a disco.*

*The matter was discussed at a meeting of the finance committee.*

*I'm sorry, Pam's at lunch just now.*

- 3** GO TO/ATTEND Used to say that someone is studying somewhere regularly:

*Is Jessica still at school?*

*Hulme was a student at Oxford in the 1960s.*

- 4** TIME/AT A PARTICULAR TIME Used to say exactly when something happens:

*The film starts at 8 o'clock.*

- 5** TIME/AT A PARTICULAR TIME during a particular period of time:

*My husband often works at night.*

*We go to Midnight Mass at Christmas.*

- 6** TOWARDS used to say which thing or person an action is directed towards or intended for:

*He gazed up at the sky.*

*You don't have to shout at me.*

*The older girls used to throw stones at me.*

*The course is aimed at those aged 16 or over.*

- 7** used to say what or who causes an action or feeling:

*The children all laughed at his jokes.*

*I'm surprised at you!*

*Dad got really mad at me for scratching the car.*

*her distress at having to leave*

- 8** used to say which subject or activity you are talking about when you say whether someone is skilful, successful etc or not:

*Barbara's getting on really well at her new job.*

**good/bad etc at (doing) something**

*I've always been good at maths.*

*Matt's bad at handling people.*

*He's an expert at making things out of junk.*

- 9** used to say that someone or something is in a particular state:

*two nations at war*

*Many children are still at risk from neglect or abuse.*

- 10** used to show a price, rate, level, age, speed etc:

*old books selling at 10 cents each*

*You should have more sense at your age.*

*The Renault was travelling at about 50 mph.*

*Amanda rode off at a gallop.*

**11 at your best/worst/most effective etc**

used to say that, at a particular time, someone or something is as good, bad etc as they can be:

*The garden is at its best in June.*

*This was Federer at his most powerful.*

**12 TRY TO DO OR GET SOMETHING** used to say what someone tries to touch, or keeps touching:

*I clutched at the rope.*

*George was just picking at his food.*

*Sarah took another sip at her wine.*

**13 TRY TO DO OR GET SOMETHING** used to say what someone tries to do:

*the student's first attempt at a piece of research*

*They were so beautiful that I decided to have a go at growing them.*

**14 BECAUSE** because of what someone has said:

*Chapman visited Austria at the invitation of his friend, Hugo Meisl.*

*At my suggestion, Bernard went to see his former teacher.*

**15 while I'm/you're etc at it** (spoken)

used to suggest that someone should do something while they are doing something else:

*I'm just going for a cup of coffee. Shall I bring you one while I'm at it?*

**16 be at it again** (informal)

if you say that someone is at it again, you mean that they are doing something you disapprove of, which they have done before:

*She's at it again, interfering in other people's business.*

**17 at that**

**a) AND/ALSO**

also or besides:

*It's a new idea, and a good one, at that.*

**b)** AFTER

after something is said:

*Tess called him a liar and at that he stormed out of the room.*

**18 be where it's at** (old-fashioned) (informal) FASHIONABLE

used to say that a place or activity is very popular, exciting, and fashionable

→ **at all** AT ALL<sup>1</sup> (6)

## Grammar

### at, in, on

Talking about time

Use **at**

– with clock times:

*at one o'clock*

*at 6.30*

– with points of time in the day:

*at midnight*

*at noon*

*at dawn*

*at sunset*

– with holiday periods, meaning the few days around the holiday:

*at Easter*

*at Diwali*

– with **weekend**, in British English:

*See you at the weekend!*

*At weekends we go out.*

Use **in**

– with parts of the day:

*in the morning*

*in the evening*

*I never watch TV in the daytime.*

- with months, seasons, years, and centuries:

*in May*  
*in the summer*  
*in 2004*  
*in the 21st century*

Use **on**

- with dates and specific days:

*on 29th July*  
*on Tuesday afternoons*  
*on the last day of term*

- with **weekend**, in American English:

*We sometimes go there on weekends.*

Talking about position and place

Use **at**

- with particular positions or places:

*at the end of the corridor*  
*at the back of the room*  
*at the corner of the street*

- to mean 'next to' or 'beside':

*She sat at her desk.*  
*He stopped me at the door.*

- with words for buildings, for example **airport**, **university**, **restaurant**, **art gallery**:

*at the airport*  
*at the Lyceum theatre*

- with city or place names, when you are talking about stopping during a journey:

*Does this train stop at Watford?*

⚠ BUT otherwise use **in** – see below

Use **in**

- with a position or place, when something or someone is inside a larger thing such as a room:

*in the bath*

*in the kitchen*  
*in the garden*  
*in the doorway*

- with cities, counties, states, and countries:

*When will you arrive in Tokyo?*  
*He lives in Germany.*  
*She's working in California.*

- with the names of squares, plazas etc:

*in Times Square*

Use **on**

- with a position or place, when one thing is attached to or touching another:

*a spot on the end of her nose*  
*He hung his jacket on the back of a chair.*

You can use either **in** or **on** with street names in British English. In American English, use **on**:

*in Oxford Street*  
*on the High Street*  
*on 42nd Street*  
*on Broadway*

### Word origin

**Language:** Old English

**Origin:** *æt*