

10 Prepositions

Get cracking

A group of children are playing Chinese whisper, where each child is whispering a phrase into the next one's ear. Read what they said and fill in the blanks. Choose the correct word from the brackets.

1st child: There is a bird.

2nd child: The bird is _____ the sky. (in/on)

3rd child: There is a dog.

4th child: The dog is _____ the sofa. (on/in)

5th child: There is a boy.

5th child: The boy is _____ (in/on) blue jeans.



Simple prepositions

The prepositions **in**, **on**, **of**, **at**, **behind**, and so on are one word prepositions. They are called simple prepositions.

Examples: There is a café **at** the corner **of** the street.

I didn't come **by** bus. I came **on** foot.

Prepositions of time: **at**, **on**, **in**

We use **at** with clock time or meal time.

at six o'clock

at 4.45

at lunch(time)

We use **on** + day/date.

on Monday

on 6th March

on Christmas Day

on New Year's Day

But we say:

at Christmas (holiday period of two or three days)
at the weekend

We use **in** with longer periods (as months/years/seasons).

in 1995

in June

in winter

in the 20th century

We use **in** with a part of the day.

in the morning

in the afternoon

But we say:

at night

We say **on** with a part of the day + day/date.

on Sunday morning

on Friday evening

on the afternoon of 10th

Omission of **at**, **on**, **in**

We do not normally use **at**, **on** or **in** before time phrases beginning with **last**, **next**, **this** or **every**.

I received the letter **last Tuesday**. (Not : on last Tuesday.)

I'll see you again **next month**. (Not : in next month.)

Are you free **this afternoon**? (Not : in this afternoon.)

Peter came **last Christmas**. (Not : at last Christmas.)

We go to Bengaluru **every summer**. (Not: in every summer.)

Prepositions of place: **at**, **in**, **on**

Rule 1

We use **at** to talk about:

- a position, a point in space

Examples: There's an old man **at** the gate.

They were waiting **at** the bus stop.

Turn left **at** the traffic light/**at** the next corner.

- events or group activities

Examples: Was Radha **at** the party?

I saw David **at** a tennis match.

There weren't many people **at** the meeting.

- shops or workplaces

Examples: I saw him **at** the baker's (shop)/**at** the supermarket.

He's **at** the doctor's.

- a person's house or flat

Example: I had tea **at** Anand's (house/flat).

- an exact address

Examples: He lives **at** 43 Ambedkar Street.

Are you still **at** the same address?

Rule 2

We use **in** when we see something as having volume or area.

Examples: Mother is **in** the kitchen.

I had thirty rupees **in** my pocket.

The children were playing **in** the park.

Rule 3

We often use **at** with a building when we are thinking of the activity that happens there; we use **in** when we mean inside the building.

Examples: We were **at** the cinema last night. (We were watching a film.)

It was very cold **in** the cinema. (inside the cinema)

Rule 4

We use **in** with cities, towns and villages when we are thinking of them as places having length and breadth. We normally use **at** when we see the city, town or village as a point on a journey.

Examples: We stayed **in** London for two days.

Our plane stopped **at** London on the way to New York.

They live **in** Raipur.

Does this train stop **at** Raipur? (Raipur station).

Rule 5

We use **in** to talk about a road or street. (In American English **on** is used).

Example: The Mehtas live **in** Museum Road/Tilak Street.

A. Fill in the blanks with suitable simple prepositions.

1. I had a cup of coffee at Mary's house.
2. There was a man sitting in the waiting room.
3. The map is on page 48.
4. Write your name at the top of the page.
5. The Prime Minister spoke to the nation on the television.

Prepositions of travel

Rule 1

We use **by** + noun to say how somebody travels. (We do not use **the/a**.)

Did you come **by** train or bus?

We say:

by bike, **by** car/road, **by** taxi, **by** bus, **by** train/rail, **by** ship/boat, **by** sea, **by** plane/air, and so on.

Rule 2

We cannot use **by** when we talk about a specific bike, car, and so on.

Examples: I'll go on my bike. (Not : **by** my bike)

He came in Mr Verma's car. (Not : **by** Mr Verma's car)

We travelled on the 8.30 bus.

Rule 3

We use **on** + **my/your** or **on** + **the/a** to talk about a specific bike, bus, train, ship or plane.

We use **in** + **my/your** or **in** + **the/a** with a specific car, taxi, van or lorry.

Examples: We say **on** foot (walking), not **by** foot.

Garry goes to school **on** foot. (He walks to school.)

Rule 4

At the beginning of a journey, we talk about getting **in** or **into** cars, taxis, lorries and vans.

At the end of a journey we talk about getting **out** **of** them. When we talk about (motor)bikes, trains, buses, ships, boats and planes, we use **on**, **onto** and **off**.

Examples: The passengers got **into** the car.

We paid the driver and got **out** **of** the taxi.

It was difficult for her to get **on** the bus.

He jumped **onto** the train.

I have to get **off** the bus at the next stop.

We'll be getting **off** the train in ten minutes.

B. Fill in the blanks with suitable prepositions.

1. Did you come _____ car?
2. He was angry _____ me _____ coming late.
3. We congratulated him _____ his success.

4. They don't know the cause _____ the accident.
5. We were surprised _____ what he said.
6. She was shocked _____ the news.
7. There is a need _____ more engineers.
8. We all got _____ the train and walked out of the station.
9. He was absent _____ work yesterday.
10. We don't know the reason _____ his absence.

Complex prepositions

Sometimes a preposition has more than one word, like *in front of*, *next to*, *on top of*, and so on. Prepositions with more than one word are called complex prepositions. Here are some complex prepositions with examples.

Preposition	Example
ahead of	The annual function had started <i>ahead of</i> time.
as far as	I like to go running <i>as far as</i> I can go along the river.
according to	<i>According to</i> the timetable, we have story-telling in the last period.
in addition to	Sumit got a prize for recitation <i>in addition to</i> one for debate.
by means of	They reached the other bank of the river <i>by means of</i> a boat.
close to	My grandmother's house is <i>close to</i> the mall.
far from	My parents are building a house <i>far from</i> the city.
due to	<i>Due to</i> the sudden rains, the sports day has been postponed.
instead of	Our sports teacher taught us chess <i>instead of</i> volley ball.
in spite of	There was a large crowd for the match <i>in spite of</i> the rain.
in order to	We need to practise <i>in order to</i> perform well in the annual day cultural programme.
in place of	The sports room has been given for the practice <i>in place of</i> the auditorium which is being renovated.

C. Fill in the blanks with suitable complex prepositions.

1. We should start early in the morning _____ reach the Taj Mahal by 10 o'clock. (due to/in order to)
2. The new gymnasium is not _____ my house. I can reach there in five minutes. (close to/far from)

3. _____ very heavy rains, the school is flooded and the reopening is postponed to next week. (instead of/due to)
4. The mountain resort is high up in the hills. We can reach the top only _____ a helicopter. (by means of/according to)
5. The skyline in New York city extends _____ the eye can see. (in spite of/as far as)
6. The train was to leave at 9.30. It seems to have left _____ schedule. (by means of/ahead of)
7. I should have worn my half-sleeve shirt _____ of this warm jacket. It is so warm now. (in place of/in spite of)

Appropriate prepositions

Some nouns, verbs and adjectives are often followed by particular prepositions: **example** (of), **suffer** (from), **popular** (with). It is useful to know which preposition to use after a particular word. You should note such combinations as you come across them in the course of your reading. Here are some of the most common combinations.

angry about/at something

angry with somebody for doing something

happy

pleased

delighted

with/at/about something

pleased with somebody

surprised/amazed/shocked at/by something

anxious about (worried about) one's health

anxious for (waiting for) news

popular with young people

similar to something

senior/junior/superior/inferior to somebody

absent from school

(She is) married to an American. (Not: married with)

good/bad/clever/brilliant at crosswords (used to talk about a person's ability)

a reason for the delay

a cause of the delay

a need for something

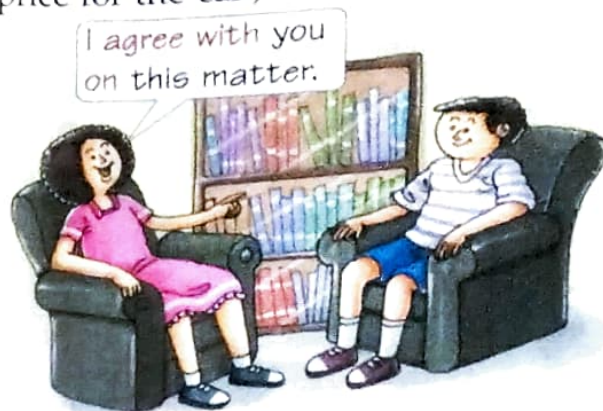
an invitation to a party

a solution to a problem

I am angry with you
for your carelessness.



difficulty/trouble with something
 agree **with** a person or opinion
 agree **about** a subject of discussion
 agree **on** a matter for decision (e.g. We agree on a price for the car.)
 agree **to/with** a suggestion
 prefer tea **to** coffee
 start **for** a place (Not: start to a place)
 suffer **from** an illness
 shout **at** a person (when you are angry)
 shout **to** a person (so that he can hear you)
 congratulate a person **on** his success
 translate something **into** another language
 operate **on** somebody for something (e.g. cancer)



Verbs and prepositions that go together

absorb	in	arrest somebody	for something
account	for	base	on
add	to	beg	for
adjust	to	begin	with
admit	to	benefit	from
agree	with	believe	in
apply	for	belong	to
appeal	to	boast	about
argue	with	borrow	from
argue	about	blame somebody	for something
arrange	for	blame something	on somebody
arrive	in/at	care	for/about
apologize	for	cater	for
approve	of	choose	between
ask	for	comment	on
accuse somebody	of something	collide	with

communicate	with	differ	from
compare	with/to	disagree	with
compete	with	disapprove	of
complain	about	discuss	with
compose	of	devote	to
concern	about/with	dream	of/about
concentrate	on	dress	in
confess	to	drink	to
confuse	with	demand smt.	from smb.
congratulate	on	derive smt.	from smt.
consist	of	discourage smb.	from smt.
contribute	to	distinguish smb./ smt.	from/between smb./ smt.
cope	with	distract smb.	from smt.
correspond	with	elaborate	on
count	on	emerge	from
cover	with	escape	from
crash	into	experiment	on
charge smb.	with smt.	excuse smb.	for smt.
charge smb.	for smt.	exchange smt.	for smt.
convict smb.	of smt.	exclude smt.	from smt.
convince smb.	of smt.	expel smb.	from smt.
cure smb.	of smt.	explain smt.	to smb.
decide	on/against	face	with
dedicate	to	feel	like
depend	on	feel	about
despair	of	fight	against/with/for
deter	from		

forget	about	operate	on
forgive someone	for something	participate	in
guess	at	pay	for
get married	to	persist	in
get rid	of	pray	for
get tired	of	prepare	for
grumble	about	prohibit	from
hear	of/about	praise smb.	for smt.
hide	from	present smb.	with smt.
hope	of/for	prevent smb.	from smt.
help smb.	with smt.	provide smb.	with smt.
hinder smb./smt.	from smt.	provide smt.	for smb.
impress	on/upon	punish smb.	for smb.
insist	on	quarrel	about smt.
insure	against	quarrel	with smb.
interfere	with/in	react	against/to
invest	in	recover	from
involve smb./smt.	in smb./smt.	refer	to
joke	about	rely	on
know	about	reply	to
laugh	at/about	resign	from
listen	to	respond	to
long	for	result	in
lend smt.	to smb.	retire	from
meet	with	room	for
mistake	for	remind smb.	of smt.
object	to	rob smb.	of smt.

search	for	suspect smb.	of smt.
see	to	talk	to
shout	at	talk	about
smile	at	think	of/about
specialize	in	turn	to
speak	to	tell smb.	about smt.
stand	for	thank smb.	for smt.
stare	at	translate smt.	into smt.
stem	from	trust smb.	with smt.
subscribe	to	use	for
substitute	for	vote	for
succeed	in	wait	for
suffer	from	wonder	at
save smb.	from smt.	work	on
sentence smb.	to smt.	worry	about
share smt.	with smb.	write	to/about
subject smb.	to smt.	warn smb.	about/against

D. Put a tick (✓) for the correct sentences and cross (✗) for the incorrect ones.

1. Minority groups are often discriminated at in our society.
2. Immigrants are required to register to the appropriate authorities.
3. Wars are often triggered by violent incidents.
4. It is sometimes important for students to focus on task in groups.
5. Most of students in London have financial worries.
6. There is a greater emphasis on theory in this course.
7. The results were consistent with our expectations for the experiment.
8. This study will examine the contrast between the characters of Oedipus and Macbeth.

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