

A Complete Guide to Prepositions (with Preposition Examples)

What is a preposition? Here we're going to explain what a preposition is, how to use it, and many useful preposition examples in English. When you are studying English grammar, you have likely come across the idea of the preposition, but what is this and how does it function within a sentence? In this article, we are going to be looking in a little more depth at what a preposition is, how they are used, and the rules surrounding them. We are also going to be looking at some examples and exercises in order to gain a greater understanding of their function.

What is a Preposition?

In the most simple terms, **a preposition is a word that can link verbs, nouns, and pronouns together**. In many cases, it might suggest location or any other type of relationship which occurs between the various words within a sentence.

Many words can be classed as a preposition but that does not mean that they are one all the time. For example, let's take the word 'after' as an example. On its own it is not a preposition, take a look at the following sentence.

- *He didn't meet her until after.*

In this case, the word after serves as an adverb, however by changing its location in the sentence and linking it to a noun, it then becomes a preposition. Take a look at this sentence:

- *We will meet after lunch.*

The word after now has a relationship to the noun lunch, which turns it into a preposition.

The Importance of Prepositions

In the English language, prepositions are words that connect nouns, pronouns, and phrases to other words in a sentence.

A preposition is used before a noun, pronoun, or gerund to show **place** (*prepositions of place*), **time** (*prepositions of time*), **direction** (*prepositions of movement*),... in a sentence.

Preposition examples: *After, along, above, except, from, near, of, before, since, between, upon, with, to, after, toward, in, on, at, about, apropos, according to,...*

Common Preposition Examples

In the morning

In (the) summer

In a moment

On Thursday

On the first day

On time

At 12 o'clock

At present

In Manhattan

In a building

On a wall

At the corner

Below the surface

In front of the city hall

During the conference

Before dawn

Within seven days

Into her eyes

Across the road

Along the beach

Down the hill

Prepositions

Types of Prepositions

There are five different types of prepositions in English grammar.

1. Prepositions of time (*ago, before, since...*)
2. Prepositions of place (*under, behind, between...*)
3. Prepositions of movement/ Direction (*up, down, over...*)
4. Prepositions for agent, instruments, devices, machines...(*by, with, on...*)
5. Prepositional phrases (*in time, on time, in love...*)

Prepositional Phrases

AT	IN	ON
at home	in the house	on the corner
at work	in a car	on a train
at university	in a helicopter	on a plane
at college	in a boat	on a ship
at school	in a lift (elevator)	on a motorbike
at the bus stop	in a taxi	on a bus
at the traffic lights	in a traffic jam	on the way
at the top	in the sky	on the ceiling
at someone's house	in bed	on the roof
at the hairdresser's	in a room	on the second floor
at the Chrysler Building	in a building	on a wall
at the doctor's	in Times Square	on a bicycle
at the entrance	in the beginning	on a list
at the exit	in the end	on the menu

Prepositional Phrases

AT

IN

ON

at 7 am	in the morning	on Monday
at 12 o'clock	in January	on 1st January 2013
at 5 pm	in (the) spring	on April 3rd
at noon/ midday	in 1980	on the 10th
at night/ midnight	in the 1960s	on the first day
at bedtime	in the North/ South	on my birthday
at the same time	in the West/ East	on holiday
at dinner	in the 21st century	on my wedding day
at that time	in the Easter holiday	on that day
at dawn	in the past/ future	on a summer evening
at Christmas	in a week	on New Year's day
at the weekend (U.K)	in a few minutes	on weekdays
at present	in an hour	on time
at the moment	In the Ice Age	on Sunday morning(s)

Prepositional Phrases

AT

IN

ON

at the top of page	in the picture	on television
at the front desk	in the journal	on the radio
at a party	in the world	on an island
at 189 Oxford Street	In Oxford Street	on Seventh Avenue
at the crossroads	in the street	on the beach
at the front	in the North/ South	on the left
at the back	in the West/ East	on the right
at the office	in prison	on the Internet
at the station	in the cinema	on the ground
at a concert	in a line	on an elephant
at the bottom	in a queue	on a farm
at the side	in a row	on the ceiling
at reception	in a garden	on a list
at the door	in the kitchen	on the cover

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

AT

ON

IN

BY

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At first• At the end• At ease (with)• At first sight• At midday• At fault• At full strength• At the moment• At hand• At heart• At home (with)• At university (UK)• At issue• At large• At least• At length• At most• At night• At noon• At a stand• At once• At the latest• At work• At present | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• On time• On television• On strike• On show• On sale• On remand• On reflection• On purpose• On principle• On paper• On order• On occasion• On no account• On leave• On holiday• On hand• On guard• On foot• On fire• On file• On edge• On credit• On condition that• On business | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the news• In the end• In a flash• In (the) winter• In a hurry• In a mess• In the air• In a sense• In tears• In return• In the morning• In action• In advance• In a moment• In aid of• In brief• In an instant• In answer to• In existence• In fact• In the past• In effect• In error• In (the) fall | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• By the time• By the side of• By the arm/ hand• By surprise• By sight• By rights• By request• By reason of• By process of• By post• By order of• By now• By nature• By my watch• By mistake• By marriage• By luck• By law• By invitation• By heart• By hand• By force• By far• By design |
|--|--|---|--|

How to Use Prepositions

English can be complicated. Languages in general just have so many different parts of speech and ways to put them together. Luckily, all the rules and types of words can be broken down into manageable sizes. This keeps it from feeling so overwhelming. We're here to help you navigate English and make it seem much easier to understand! This section is focused specifically on preposition rules.

Preposition Rules: As with all areas of grammar, there are rules when it comes to the use of the preposition. Let's dive a little deeper here and take a look at the rules in order to enable us to use the preposition correctly.

Rule #1

As a rule of thumb, the preposition should go before the pronoun or noun to which it has a relationship. However, this is not always the case and there are some exceptions to this rule. Many people are of the belief that a preposition does not belong at the end of a sentence, but by taking a look at the following example, we can see that this is not true.

- *This is something I do not agree with.*

As you can see, the preposition 'with' has ended the sentence, however, this should only be done if the preposition provides relevant information to the sentence. If you were to add the phrase 'with which' into the middle of this sentence, the final preposition would not be necessary, let's take a look at this:

- *This is something with which I do not agree (with)*

We are now going to look at some further examples of times when a preposition might come at the end of a sentence.

- *Where did the man come from?*
- *How many of these people can he depend on?*
- *Who are you going on holiday with?*

Rule #2

When using the preposition ‘like’ which means similar, you should follow it with an object of a preposition, this is either a noun phrase, noun, or pronoun and not with a subject and verb. In order to help you to remember this, you should always avoid the use of like when using a verb. Let’s take a look at some examples of this.

- *She looks like her father*
- *She looks like her father does.*

The first sentence is correct as the preposition ‘like’ is referring to the noun ‘father.’ However, the following sentence does not make sense since the preposition ‘like’ now leads us to believe that she looks (with her eyes) in the same manner that her father looks with his eyes.

When making a comparison using a subject and verb, you should use the word ‘as’ rather than ‘like’ because this will make much more sense. For example:

- *He looks like he's laughing.*
- *He looks as though he's laughing.*

The second sentence in the above example is correct. It is important to remember to only use like when you are saying that something is similar. If the word like cannot be reasonably replaced with similar, then ‘as’ should be used in its place. To make this clearer, let’s look at an example.

- *Do like the teacher asks.*
- *Do as the teacher asks.*

The first sentence could also be worded as ‘do similarly as the teacher asks’ and this would not make sense, therefore the second sentence is grammatically correct.

The best way of choosing between like and as is to remember that like should be used when there is no verb, and as should be used when there is a verb.

Rule #3

When using the verb ‘to have’ you should never replace it with the preposition ‘of.’ This is not grammatically correct. Look at the following examples:

- *He should not have done that.*
- *He should not of done that.*

The first sentence is correct, although many English speakers may incorrectly use the preposition of, this is not how it should be done.

Rule #4

If you are going to use the word ‘different’ then it is usual to follow it with the preposition ‘from.’ In some cases, you will notice that the term ‘different than’ may be used, and whilst this is not entirely grammatically incorrect, it polarizes the statement rather than making it unchallengeable.

- *He is different than she is.*
- *He is different from her.*

Rule #5

If you wish to refer to a motion towards something then you should use the preposition ‘into’ instead of ‘in.’ Let’s take a look at some examples of this.

- *She walked into the room.*
- *She walked in the room.*

The above example shows that into makes more sense and is grammatically correct rather than the use of the word in. Let’s see another example of this.

- *They dived into the sea.*
- *They dived in the sea.*

If you are talking about something already being in something and not going towards it, then you would use the word ‘in’ and not ‘into.’ Take a look at the following two sentences and see which one sounds correct.

- *She swam in the ocean.*
- *She swam into the ocean.*

Preposition Examples

Learn a useful [list of prepositions](#) (See Link) classified by different categories with example sentences.

Examples of Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition.

- **Under construction**

A new railroad is under construction.

- **For real**

After two trial runs we did it for real.

- **At the same time**

All speak at the same time.

- **By the time**

By the time I got there, he'd gone.

- **By the way**

By the way, how is John?

- On paper

*Could you put your ideas down **on paper**?*

- With regret

*Do not waste time **with regret**.*

- At a discount

*Employees can buy books **at a discount**.*

- Without a hitch

*Everything had gone **without a hitch**.*

- Under treatment

*He is **under treatment** for malaria.*

- By force

*He took the purse from her **by force**.*

- On board

*He tried to jump back **on board**.*

- At risk

*He was putting himself **at risk**.*

- By nature

*He was **by nature** a philosophical person.*

- In vain

*Her efforts were **in vain**.*

- On trial

*He's **on trial** for his life.*

- In debt

*I am **in debt** to the bank for my car loan.*

- With regard to

*I am writing **with regard to** your recent order.*

- With respect

*I ask for her hand **with all respect**.*

- For life

*I believe marriage is **for life**.*

- Out of place

*I felt **out of place** among foreigners.*

- For ages

*I haven't seen you **for ages**.*

- By mistake

*I've paid this bill twice **by mistake**.*

- Out of stock

*I'm afraid we're temporarily **out of stock**.*

- Within limits

*I'm willing to help, **within limits**.*

- Under repair

*Is the bridge still **under repair**?*

- Without precedent

*It is **without precedent** in history.*

- In theory

*It sounds fine **in theory**, but will it work?*

- At least

*It will cost **at least** \$200.*

- To the full

*I've always believed in living **life to the full**.*

- Out of school

*Never tell tales **out of school**.*

- By now

*Perhaps they are already there **by now**.*

- **For a while**

*Please sit down **for a while**.*

- **With abandon**

*She danced **with abandon**.*

- **In detail**

*She described the accident **in detail**.*

- **For sale**

*She has put her house up **for sale**.*

- **By far**

*She is the best **by far**.*

- **At the age of**

*She went blind **at the age of** ten.*

- **On leave**

*She's **on leave** until the end of the month.*

- **In case**

*Took an umbrella, just **in case**.*

- **In full**

*The apple trees are **in full** bearing.*

- **On the move**

*The army is **on the move**.*

- **In terms of**

*The book is well organized **in terms of** plot.*

- **Out of order**

*The boy put the telephone **out of order**.*

- **To date**

*The car is a beauty and quite up **to date**.*

- **On fire**

*The car was now **on fire**.*

- **Out of control**

*The fire is burning **out of control**.*

- **Under review**

*The matter is still **under review**.*

- **On sale**

*The new model goes **on sale** next month.*

- **On show**

*The paintings are **on show** until April.*

- **Within walking**

*The shops are **within walking** distance.*

- **Under stress**

*The silver was deformed **under stress**.*

- **At peace**

*The two countries were **at peace**.*

- **Out of fashion**

*Their music will never go **out of fashion**.*

- **Under the stairs**

*There's a broom cupboard **under the stairs**.*

- **For hire**

*They have boats **for hire**.*

- **Out of hand**

*Unemployment is getting **out of hand**.*

- **Within reach**

*We live **within reach** of the station.*

- **For nothing**

*We went all that way **for nothing**.*

- **With a view of**

*We'd like a room **with a view of the sea**.*

- **In doubt**

*When **in doubt**, call the doctor.*

- **Without respect**

*Without **respect**, love cannot go far.*

- **At once**

*You have to call her **at once**.*

Source:

<https://7esl.com/prepositions/>