





Vocabulary 13—Prepositions

When you are just starting to speak Russian you can memorize rules about which preposition to use when, but there is no substitute for a deep understanding of the core meaning of each preposition. Such a deep understanding will allow you to both make and to understand innovative uses of prepositional phrases.

In the chart below we explain what a preposition says about the relationship between its object (the word which comes after it) and the action which the verb represents. This is explained for literal objects. In the examples you will see abstract and figurative meanings derived from the literal meaning. In many cases the “action” is simply being. When we refer to things as “solid bodies” and “surfaces” we mean that that is how the narrator has chosen to view them. They may in fact have interior spaces which are irrelevant in the given context.

The most commonly used prepositions have been marked with an asterisk (*).

Preposition	Case	Object of Preposition Describes	Examples
без/безо* ie / ie a ohne	gen.	a thing which is missing	чай без молока—tea without milk без суда и следствия—without trial or investigation
близ nahe von	gen.	landmark not far from which the action takes place	близ Рима—not far from Rome
в/во* o	acc.	enclosed space into which the action goes	войти в дом—to enter the house упасть в воду—to fall into the water попасть в беду—to get into peril or adversity
 в/во* in	prep.	enclosed space to which the action is confined	сидеть в доме—to be sitting in the house быть в затруднении—to be in a difficult situation
 в/во* in	nom. pl.	a role which the subject of the sentence may play (rare usage)	идти в гости—to go as guest(s) кандидат в президенты—candidate for president
вдоль o дол=Tal entlang	gen.	long body along which the action takes place	вдоль реки—alongside the river
вместо ie a место=Platz anstatt	gen.	person or thing for which a substitution is made	карандаш вместо ручки—a pencil instead of a pen
вне ie не=nicht ausserhalb	gen.	enclosed space outside of which the action takes place	вне всякого сомнения—beyond all doubt
внутри innerhalb	gen.	enclosed space inside of which the action takes place	внутри страны—inside the country внутри тела—inside the body
возле o e neben	gen.	person or thing near which the action takes place	возле меня—next to me
вокруг a : круг=Kreis herum	gen.	solid body around which the action revolves	тропинка вокруг озера—the path around the lake всё вокруг побелело—everything turned white
вопреки ö e : gegen	dat.	a thing defied or ignored	вопреки моей воли—against my will
для* ia für	gen.	person or thing to which an offering or contribution is brought	подарок для Вас—a gift for you
до* a bis	gen.	final point reached by the action	до начала—before the start слух дошёл до меня—the rumor reached me
за*	acc.	solid body which the action moves behind	зайти за дом—to go behind the house сесть за стол—to sit down at the table
 за*	inst.	solid body behind which the action takes place	сидеть за столом—to be sitting at table за дверью—behind the door за скромной улыбкой—behind the modest smile
 за*	nom.	category to which the subject of the sentence belongs	Кто он за отец?—What is he like as a father? Что это за компьютер?—What is this computer like?

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из* aus	gen.	enclosed space which the action leaves	высыпать из банки—to pour out of a can из внешнего мира—from the world outside
из-за wegen, aus-hinter	gen.	solid body from behind which the action comes	из-за сарая—out from behind the shed из-за помех—through the static
из-под i: ö aus-unter	gen.	surface or solid body from under which the action comes	из-под стола—from under the table отпустить из-под стражи—release from arrest
к* zu	dat.	solid body toward which action moves	Я иду к врачу.—I am going to the doctor. к моему удивлению—to my astonishment
кроме o ie pom=Rum ausser	gen.	person, thing, or event which is an exception	кроме меня—except for me
между ie zwischen	inst. or rarely acc.	the things among or between which the action takes place	между пальцами—between (or among) the fingers между войнами—between the wars стрела
мимо мим=Mime : a nahe ... vorbei	gen.	solid body which the action narrowly avoids striking	стерла пролетела мимо—the arrow flew close by мимо цели—missing the mark
на* auf	acc. prep.	surface onto which the action moves surface to which the action is confined	поставить на стол—to put onto the table выставить на продажу—to put up for sale работать на крыше—to work on the roof на этой неделе —during this week неделе
над/надо a: ä небо=Himmel über, oberhalb	inst.	surface or solid body over which the action takes place or movement to such a position	над головой—overhead суд над Гиммлером—the trial of Himmler
о/об/обо* a a o a about, against	prep.	the subject matter of a narrative	говорить о Библии—to talk about the Bible
	acc.	solid body up against the side of which the action takes place	упираться о стену—to lean against the wall
около o ö ä in etwa	gen.	solid body in the general vicinity of which the action takes place	около шести—at about six o'clock
от/ото* a o a von	gen.	solid body away from which action moves	Я пришёл от матери.—I have come from mother. ручка от двери—handle from the door письмо от Давида—a letter from David
по* a bei, entlang, ...	dat.	surface or space along which the action takes place	по краю—along the edge ходить по магазинам—to visit various stores почему—why?
bei & (Beendigung/prep.) von & (gen.)	prep.	a concluding event which proceeds the action	по истечении срока—at the conclusion of the period по окончании работы—when work is over bei Ablauf von Frist bei Beendigung von Arbeit
	acc.	final limit of a space completely covered by the action	стоять по пояс в воде—to stand in water up to the waist
под/подо* CH Bodä o o ä a. falls erste Silbe des Nomen betont unter	acc.	surface or solid body under which the action goes	побежать под стол—to run under the table под покров ночи—into the dark of night cover
	inst.	surface or solid body under which the action takes place	под крышей—under a roof под угрозой—under threat под законом Ньютона—by Newton's law под шумом дождя—to the sound of rain



перед/передо е і е і ä vor	inst.	solid body right in front of which the action takes place or movement to such a position	передо мной—before my face перед ужином—a little before supper
подле а е: direkt neben	gen.	person or thing very near which the action takes place	подле моего дома—right next to my house
при* mit	prep.	solid body in the presence of which the action takes place	при одеяле подушка—the blanket includes a pillow при Советской власти—under Soviet rule
после* о ä nach	gen.	event after which action takes place	после войны—after the war после меня—after my turn
про а für / über	acc.	person or thing to which the action pertains	про него много слышать—to hear a lot about him Это не про Вас.—This is not about you. читать про себя—to read to oneself
ради а: für	gen.	person or thing for the sake of which the action was undertaken	ради Бога—for God's sake
с/со* а weg von with wie	gen.	surface which the action leaves	сойти с крыши—to come down from the roof съехать с дороги—to exit the road сойти с ума—to go crazy
	inst.	companion of one of the participants	Иди со мной.—Go with me. пирог с мороженым—pie with ice cream
	acc.	object or unit of comparable size	величиной с дом—as large as a house подождать минуту—to wait for a minute
сверх ie darüber hinaus	gen.	that which is exceeded	сила сверх обычного—power beyond what is normal сверх того—more than that, what is more
сквозь hin-/durch	acc.	obstacle which the action pierces	пробурить сквозь доску—to bore through the board
среди е i: zwischen	gen.	the things between which the action takes place	среди пальцев—between (or among) the fingers среди бела дня—in broad daylight
у* bei	gen.	solid body next to which action takes place	У меня есть имя—I have a name. Он у меня живёт.—He lives at my house.
через i: i durch	acc.	space through which the action moves without any important interaction with it	идти через дорогу—to cross the road прыжок через акулу—jumping the shark