

Prepositions

PREPOSITION OR ADVERB?

Preposition or Adverb? - Introduction

Very often, the same word can be used as a preposition, or an adverb.

This can cause confusion for learners.

There is a simple way to tell the difference.

If there is an object, it's a preposition.

We can also ask the question "What?" to make it clearer.

If there is no object, it's an adverb.

Preposition or Adverb? – Example #1

If the word has an object, then it is a preposition.

➤ Small children often colour *outside* the lines.

“Outside what?”

“The lines” is the answer and also the object of *outside*.

Therefore, *outside* is a preposition here.

“Outside the lines” is an adverbial phrase.

Preposition or Adverb? – Example #2

If there is no object, it is an adverb.

➤ Why don't you all go and play *outside*?

The question “Outside what?” has no answer.

There is no object after the word *outside*.

Therefore, *outside* is an adverb, specifically an adverb of place.