

Prepositions

PREPOSITIONS OF TIME

Prepositions of Time - Introduction

The most common prepositions of time are 'at', 'on' and 'in'.

Others include 'for', 'during', 'since', 'by', 'until', 'before', 'after', 'to' and 'past'.

Prepositions of Time - at

We use 'at' for specific times of the day.

- Let's meet *at* noon tomorrow.
- Could we meet *at* 1 o'clock instead?
- The film starts *at* 7 o'clock in the evening.
- Julie usually gets up *at* 6 o'clock in the morning.
- Peter usually start work *at* 9 and finished *at* 6.
- Most people put the cat out *at* night.

Prepositions of Time - on

We use 'on' for days and dates.

- I have an appointment *on* Friday.
- Shall we go out for a meal *on* your birthday?
- I can't make it *on* Saturday – could we go *on* Sunday instead?
- New Year's Eve is *on* December 31st.
- Isaac Newton was born *on* Christmas Day, 1643.

Prepositions of Time - in

We use 'in' for months, years, seasons and specific times of the day.

- School starts *in* September this year.
- We were on holiday *in* March last year.
- There will be an election *in* 2020.
- Winston Churchill was born *in* 1874.
- Could I book an appointment *in* the afternoon?
- *In* the bleak midwinter ...

Prepositions of Time - for

We use 'for' for duration of time.

- My grandparents usually sleep *for* 15 minutes after lunch.
- We worked in the garden *for* 6 hours without taking a break.
- John has lived in France *for* 12 years.
- Simon has lived in the same house *for* over 50 years.

Prepositions of Time - during

We use 'during' with a noun to say when something happened, usually within a specific period of time.

- The fire alarm went off *during* lunch.
- Students are not allowed to eat or drink *during* class.
- It is annoying when people talk *during* films.
- Please switch off all phones *during* the exam.

Prepositions of Time - since

We use 'since' for events starting from a specific time.

- Peter and John have known each other *since* they were children.
- James has lived in London *since* 2005.
- (BUT: Mary has lived in Rome **for** 12 years) !!
- What have you been up to *since* we last met?
- I've been working here *since* August.
- Will it take much longer? I've been waiting *since* 10 o'clock.

Prepositions of Time - by

We use 'by' to mean 'not later than'.

- The report must be finished *by* Friday.
- No worries - I will make sure it is done *by* then.
- Paula has to be home *by* 6 o'clock or else there's trouble.
- Tim said he would be back *by* midnight.

Prepositions of Time - until

We use 'until' to describe a continuous action or event that stops (or stopped) at a specific time.

In informal text, we can use 'till' instead of 'until'.

- The concert went on *until* midnight.
- I will wait for you *until* 7 o'clock.
- Sandy is staying with her mother *until* Sunday.
- Geese stay here *until* October, then they fly south for the winter.
- The lads stayed in the pub *until* it closed.

Prepositions of Time - before

We use 'before' for something prior to a defined time or event.

- Please tidy up your desk *before* you leave.
- Dennis always go to bed *before* midnight.
- Conrad always eat a good breakfast *before* going to work.
- Most people are nervous *before* exams.
- You must visit us *before* you go back.

Prepositions of Time - after

We use 'after' for something following a defined time or event.

- Ben always has a shower *after* his workout.
- The students celebrated *after* the last exam.
- Please keep the noise down *after* 10 at night.
- Why don't you come around *after* work tomorrow?
- *After* you talk to him, come and see me.

Prepositions of Time - to

We use 'to' in relation to the next hour of the day.

- It is 20 minutes *to* seven now. (06:40)
- In five minutes, it will be a quarter *to* seven. (06:45)
- In ten minutes, it will be ten *to* seven. (06:50)
- I set the alarm for exactly 12 minutes *to* 8. (07:48)
- If the meeting starts at 10, get there no later than 5 *to* 10.

Prepositions of Time - past

We use 'past' in relation to the current hour of the day.

- It is 10 minutes *past* eight now. (08:10)
- In five minutes, it will be a quarter *past* eight. (08:15)
- In ten minutes, it will be 20 *past* eight. (08:20)
- I set the alarm for exactly 12 minutes *past* 8. (08:12)
- A 10 o'clock meeting should start no later than 5 *past* 10