

Prepositions

In this chapter, learn:

- the function of a preposition in the structure of a phrase
- the classification of prepositions based on their form: simple prepositions, compound prepositions, complex prepositions
- to identify the following types of prepositions
 - prepositions of place
 - prepositions of time
 - prepositions of direction
 - prepositions of cause and purpose
- how certain nouns, adjectives and verbs collocate with specific prepositions
- the structure and functions of a prepositional phrase

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A preposition is a word that joins nouns, pronouns or phrases to other words in a sentence. It usually shows the relationship of those words or phrases with other words in the sentence with regard to space, time or reason.

A preposition usually comes before a noun. Often, however, a preposition does not come directly before a noun as there may be determiners or adjectives between them.

We met *after* class. (before the noun)

We met *in* the arts class.

(before the determiner *the* and the adjective *arts*)

Here *after* and *in* are prepositions. The noun that the preposition comes before is called the object of the preposition. In the sentences above, the object of each of the prepositions is the word *class*.

When a preposition is not followed by a noun, it is often called a stranded preposition.

Grammar Point

A preposition tells us the relation of its object to other words in the sentence. In fact the word *preposition* literally means 'pre-position' because it comes before a noun or a pronoun.

A stranded preposition comes at the end of a sentence when its object is a relative pronoun or an interrogative pronoun (words like *that*, *who*, *which*, etc.).

Have you found the shoes *that* you were looking *for*?
(object – relative pronoun *that*)

What are you so angry *about*?
(object – interrogative pronoun *what*)

Sometimes we also use the stranded preposition when the object needs to be given greater importance. The preposition is then used after its object and at the end of the sentence.

This is *the play* Mira spoke *about*. (Mira spoke about this play.)
This requires looking *into*. (We need to look into this.)

Prepositions can be categorized into three based on their form:

- simple prepositions
- compound prepositions
- complex or phrase prepositions

Simple Prepositions: Single-word prepositions are called simple prepositions. Some examples are *in*, *on*, *at*, *by*, *from*, *about*, *over*, *under*, *through*, *till*, *up*, *off*, *of*, *for*, *to*, etc.

The children made castles *in* sand.

Did you hear *about* Bina's aunt?

Gary jumped *off* the wall.

Compound Prepositions: When two or more words are combined to form one single preposition, we have a compound preposition. Sometimes these may be formed by putting a preposition before a noun, adverb or adjective. At other times, it may be a combination of two prepositions. Some examples of compound prepositions are *into*, *across*, *without*, *within*, *inside*, *outside*, *beneath*, *below*, *behind*, *between*, etc.

The excited children jumped *into* the pool.

The book fell *behind* the cupboard.

Can you manage *without* your reading glasses for two days?

Complex or Phrase Prepositions: When a group of words does the work of a single preposition, it is called a complex or phrase preposition. Some two-word complex prepositions are *along with*,



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according to, apart from, because of, contrary to, regardless of, prior to, due to, except for, etc.

Many three-word prepositions have the form:

preposition + noun + preposition

Some such prepositions are *in front of, with reference to, in spite of, in addition to, by means of, in place of, on behalf of, in accordance with, in line with, in relation to, etc.*

I parked the car *in front of* the gate.

According to Sagar, the movie is not worth watching.

Many farmers lose their crops *due to* floods.

In accordance with the school policy, fees must be paid on time.



A

EXERCISE

Use simple, compound or complex prepositions to fill in the blanks. Try not to repeat any preposition.

1. There is a funny umbrella stand _____ the door.
2. _____ a recent survey, the boy-girl ratio has fallen again.
3. This is _____ your letter dated 26 March 2017.
4. You must start _____ time.
5. Please look in the box _____ the window.
6. The plants _____ the front door are beginning to dry up.
7. Life was simpler _____ all the modern technical devices that exist today.
8. On the flight from Bagdogra, I sat _____ a famous football star.



Prepositions may be classified into four based on their function:

- prepositions of place
- prepositions of time
- prepositions of direction
- prepositions of cause and purpose

■ Prepositions of Place

Prepositions of place tell us where something is. Some prepositions of place are *above, below, under, over, beside, down, near, in front of, around*, etc.

There is a fence *around* the garden.

The paintings *on* the roof of the church are beautiful.

Have you looked *under* the bed?

At, in and *on* are used as prepositions of both place and time. Let's study each in turn.



prepositions of place		examples
at	a specific point or area	Please wait <i>at</i> the reception desk.
	a particular address	Everybody gathered <i>at</i> 14, Park Street.
	before the name of a place	We stood <i>at</i> the bus stop.
in	an enclosed space	The jewels are kept <i>in</i> a box.
	a large area like a town or a city	We waited <i>in</i> the reception hall for two hours.
on	a surface	I live <i>in</i> Kerala <i>in</i> a town called Alappuzha.
	before the names of roads and streets	The soup is <i>on</i> the table.
		This is from a shop <i>on</i> the Ring Road.

■ Prepositions of Time

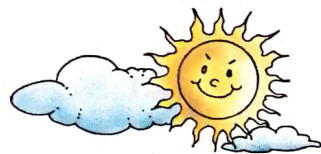
Prepositions of time tell us *when*. Some prepositions of time are *on, in, at, till, during, after, before, since, for*, etc.

Meet me *after* 4 o'clock.

During summer, it becomes very hot and humid in the plains.

He has been living here *for* five years.

Let's look at the use of *at, in* and *on* as prepositions of time.



prepositions of time		examples
at	a specific point in time	■ We have an assembly <i>at</i> 8 a.m.
	with names of festivals	■ What did you discuss <i>at</i> the meeting?
		■ Will you visit us <i>at</i> Deepavali?

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in	a period of time – minutes, hours	■ The courier will arrive <i>in</i> two hours.
	time of day	■ The competition will start <i>in</i> fifteen minutes.
	season	■ We have the matches <i>in</i> the afternoon.
	month, year	■ <i>In</i> winter it snows heavily in Srinagar.
on	a particular day	■ We will get the results <i>in</i> May.
		■ I finished school <i>in</i> 2005.
		■ <i>On</i> Christmas day, everybody gets gifts.
		■ The prime minister addresses the nation <i>on</i> Independence Day.
		■ I was at work <i>on</i> Sunday.
		■ We had a holiday <i>on</i> 28 September 2018.

Remember: When we refer to the exact time, we say *on time*.

The train left *on time*. (at the exact time; neither early, nor late)

However, we use *in time* for a time before the exact time.

We reached *in time* to catch the train.

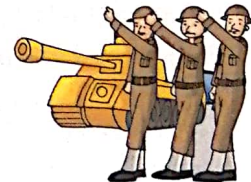
(There was time before the train left.)

B

EXERCISE

Use appropriate prepositions of place and time to fill in the blanks.

- I was born _____ Shimla _____ a Thursday.
- There are muddy footprints _____ the floor.
- Who put all the old magazines _____ the cupboard?
- We celebrate Army Day _____ 15 January every year.
- I was part of the parade _____ Republic Day.
- _____ the holidays, it is difficult to get back to school.
- _____ going home, Jim bought a bunch of flowers for his wife.
- Have you looked _____ the couch for your shoes?
- I can't see Harsha. Mala is standing _____ her.
- I live _____ the old Post Office.
- Ours is the red house _____ the road from the station.
- There is someone _____ the door.
- Who removed the pictures that were _____ the wall?
- Rahul's head reaches _____ my forehead; I am taller.
- I put all my woollens _____ a trunk.



■ Prepositions of Direction

Prepositions of movement or direction also tell us *where*, but usually indicate direction. Some prepositions of movement are *to*, *at*, *towards*, *through*, *into*, *over*, *under*, *up*, *down*, etc.

Before the competition, Jatin swam *across* the river and back to build up stamina.

He climbed *up* a tree to get *over* the wall and *into* the orchard.

When Archimedes discovered the law of buoyancy, he ran *through* the streets shouting 'Eureka!'

A flying saucer just flew *over* that building.



■ Prepositions of Cause and Purpose

When we use prepositions such as *for*, *of*, *with*, *by*, *from*, *through*, *to*, *on account of*, etc. in certain ways, they denote cause or purpose.

We need to start preparations *for* Sports Day.

He won't succeed *with* hard work alone.

I need money *for* the rent.

He could not take the exam *on account of* illness.



EXERCISE C

Identify the prepositions and write what kind they are: prepositions of time, place, direction, cause or purpose. Name the object of each preposition.

1. We were surprised to see the old man jump over the hedge.
2. It was through sheer good luck that we found our way home.
3. There was no knife, so we cut the cake with a fork.
4. She hid the knife in the cupboard.
5. When I peeped into the room, there was nobody there.
6. I saw a shy young child amidst the crowd, looking confused and lost.
7. This is just the thing I was looking for.
8. The show started at 4 p.m. and we were just in time.
9. My teeth chattered from fear as I walked down the dark road.
10. The match was cancelled due to bad weather.



■ Collocations

Certain nouns, adjectives and verbs are generally used with specific prepositions in such a way that these have become fixed ways of using these words. We often refer to such combinations as collocations.

Here are some expressions with prepositions:

noun + preposition	adjective + preposition	verb + preposition
fondness for	afraid of	apologize for
grasp of	angry at	ask about
hatred of	aware of	ask for
hope for	capable of	belong to
interest in	careless about	bring up
love of	familiar with	care for
need for	fond of	find out
participation in	happy about	prepare for
reason for	interested in	study for
respect for	jealous of	talk about

D

EXERCISE

Make sentences using the following collocations.

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|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 1. reason for | 4. need for | 7. interested in |
| 2. fond of | 5. ask about | 8. study for |
| 3. familiar with | 6. belong to | 9. jealous of |

■ Prepositional Phrases

Look at these sentences:

Bharat makes beautiful paintings *on the computer*.

Hari walked *into the darkened room* cautiously.

In these sentences, the phrases *on the computer* and *into the darkened room* begin with prepositions. They are prepositional phrases. A prepositional phrase is made up of the preposition, its object and any adjectives or adverbs that may be associated with the object.

A prepositional phrase can have the functions of an adjective or an adverb.

As an adjective, it modifies a noun and will answer the question 'which one?'.

Look at the lady *in the blue dress*. (modifying the noun *lady*)

Please take the pen *next to the telephone*.
(modifying the noun *pen*)

As an adverb, it modifies a verb. We can identify the prepositional phrase that acts like an adverb by asking the questions *how*, *when*, *why* or *where*.

The poor man sat *beside the fence*. (Sat where? *Beside the fence*.)

I go for dance classes *after school*. (Go when? *After school*.)

They finished the match *by scoring the winning goal*.
(Finished how? *By scoring the winning goal*.)



E

EXERCISE

Underline the prepositional phrase and say whether it functions as an adjective or an adverb.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jiya starts her music practice at 5 o'clock. 2. The invitation cards for the wedding have arrived. 3. The books in the box have been forgotten. 4. Do you know how to eat with a knife and fork? 5. The children leaned against the wall while they waited for their friends. 6. My classroom is next to the staffroom. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Don't leave the scissors on the table; put them back. 8. You must get back before 9 o'clock. 9. The car beside mine is Arjun's. 10. The vegetables in the basket are all fresh. 11. Why did you leave your shoes inside the car? 12. According to Manoj, the new principal is a kind man. |
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