When to use what Prepositions- Check your knowledge

Prepositions are keywords that indicate the start of a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase begins with the first preposition in the sentence and ends with the object or noun of the phrase. For example, “She sat *on the red carpet* while reading.” The italicized portion is a prepositional phrase. Generally, prepositional phrases act as adverbs or adjectives in that they modify either verbs, adverbs, or adjectives. Here is the complete [**list of prepositions**](http://www.engtuto.com/prepositions).

This section will demonstrate **how to use prepositions** for time, place, and objects in American English.

**One point in time**

“On,” “at”, and “in” are used to describe a moment in time.

**On**is used with days:

* I will see you **on** Monday.
* The week begins **on** Sunday.

**At** is used with noon, night, midnight, and with the time of day:

* My plane leaves **at** noon.
* The movie starts **at** 6 p.m.

**In** is used with other parts of the day, with months, with years, and with seasons:

* He likes to read **in** the afternoon.
* The days are long **in** August.
* The book was published **in** 1999.
* The flowers will bloom **in** spring.

**Extended time**

To express extended time, English uses the following [**prepositions**](http://www.engtuto.com/prepositions): **since, for, by, from—to, from-until, during,(with)in**

* She has been gone **since** yesterday. *(She left yesterday and has not returned.)*
* I'm going to Paris **for** two weeks. *(I will spend two weeks there.)*
* The movie showed **from** August to October. *(Beginning in August and ending in October.)*
* The decorations were up **from** spring **until** fall. *(Beginning in spring and ending in fall.)*
* I watch TV **during** the evening. *(For some period of time in the evening.)*
* We must finish the project **within** a year. *(No longer than a year.)*

**Place**

To express notions of place, English uses the following prepositions:

**In:** to talk about an object being contained.

**Inside:** to refer more specifically to where the object is contained.

**On:** to talk about the surface.

**At:** to talk about a general vicinity.

* There is a wasp **in** the house. *(The wasp is contained in the house.)*
* Go look **inside** the refrigerator. *(Inside is used as a specific place, the inside of the refrigerator.)*
* I left your keys **on** the table. *(The keys are on the surface of the table).*
* She was waiting **at** the corner. *(The corner is a general location she was waiting at.)*

**Higher than a point**

To express notions of an object being higher than a point, English uses the following prepositions: **over, above**.

**Over:** to talk about an object that has moved higher and wider than another object.

**Above:** to talk about an object that has moved higher than another object.

* He threw the ball **over** the roof. (*The ball is somewhere past the height and width of the roof.)*
* Hang that picture **above** the couch. *(The picture should be higher in relation to the couch.)*

**Lower than a point**

To express notions of an object being lower than a point, English uses the following prepositions: **under, underneath, beneath, below.**

**Under:**to describe an object that is below a general point

**Underneath:**to describe something that is below a more specific point

**Beneath:**to describe an object that is directly below another object

**Below:**to describe an object that is lower or less than another object or point

* The rabbit burrowed **under** the ground. *(The rabbit is somewhere underground.)*
* The child hid **underneath** the blanket. (*The child hid in a more specific place, a blanket.)*
* We relaxed in the shade **beneath** the branches. *(The shade lies specifically right below the branches.)*
* The valley is **below** sea-level. *(The valley is somewhere lower than sea-level)*

**Close to a point**

To describe an object as being close to a point, English uses the following prepositions: **near, by, next to, between, among, opposite**.

* She lives **near** the school. *(She lives in close proximity to the school.)*
* There is an ice cream shop **by** the store. *(The ice cream shop is very close to the store.)*
* An oak tree grows **next to** my house. (*An oak tree grows beside the house, likely in the yard.)*
* The house is **between** Elm Street and Maple Street. *(Elm and Maple Street sandwich the house).*
* I found my pen lying **among** the books.*(The pen could be anywhere around the area that the books occupy.)*
* The bathroom is **opposite** that room. *(Similar to “next to,” opposite means that the bathroom faces the room, rather than adjoins.)*

**To introduce objects of verbs**

An object of a verb adds specificity to the verb. In terms of prepositional objects, the object is introduced by a preposition. For example, in the sentence, “They fought *about* the old chair,” which object did they fight over? The chair. When introducing objects of verbs, there are some prepositions that directly follow specific verbs. Below are some examples:

**“At” is used with the following verbs: glance, laugh, look, rejoice, smile, stare**

* She glanced **at** her reflection.  
  (*exception with****mirror****:*She glanced **in** the mirror.)
* You didn't laugh **at** his joke.
* I'm looking **at** the computer monitor.
* We rejoiced **at** his safe rescue.
* That pretty girl smiled **at** you.
* Stop staring **at** me.

**“Of” is used with the following verbs: approve, consist, smell**

* I don't approve **of** his speech.
* My contribution to the article consists **of** many pages.
* He came home smelling **of** alcohol.

**“Of” (or “about”) is used with the following verbs: dream, think**

* I dream **of** finishing college in four years.
* Can you think **of** a number between one and ten?
* I am thinking **about** this problem.

**“For” is used with the following verbs: call, hope, look, wait, watch, wish**

* Did someone call **for** a taxi?
* He hopes **for** a raise in salary next year.
* I'm looking **for** my keys.
* We'll wait **for** her here.
* You go buy the tickets, and I'll watch **for** the train.