Preposition expresses a relation between TWO ENTITIES: noun, adjective or verb that comes before it, and a prepositional object, i.e. a noun/ pronoun that comes after the preposition.

In examples 1-5:

1. There is no *milk* **in** the *tea*

2. I am *angry* **with** *you*.

3. I *travel* **by** *car.*

4. The boy *came* **into** the *room*.

5. He *climbed* **onto** the *table*.

**in** shows relation between *milk* and *tea* (both nouns); **with** between *angry* (adjective) and *you* (pronoun); **by** between *travel* (verb) and *car* (noun); **into** between *came* and *room;* **onto** shows relation between *climb* and *table*.

* **in**, **with**, **by, into** and **onto** are the prepositions.

**Examples:**

In 6-11, identify the prepositions, and the relation between the words that they link.

6. Let’s meet **before** noon

7. The book is on the table.

8. This present is for me.

9. I am happy with him.

10. I live in a big house.

**Rules of Preposition**

1. **Preposition must have an object-**

A preposition is always with an object – without an object, it is an adverb that never has an object.

* He is **in** **the kitchen**. (‘in’ has object the kitchen)
* You may come **in**. (adverb ‘in’ has no object; it qualifies come)
* There was a car **before me**. (‘before’ has object ‘me’)
* Ram has never seen it **before**. (adverb ‘before’ has no object; it qualifies seen)
* We will catch up **after the gym**. (‘after’ has object ‘gym’)
* They called soon **after**. (adverb ‘after’ has no object; it qualifies ‘called’)

1. **Preposition must be placed before something-**

Generally, but not always, a preposition goes before a noun or a pronoun.

* I put the things **in the box.**(‘in’ is placed before the noun ‘’box’)
* The book is **on** the table.
* My daughter is very fond **of** grapes, apples and oranges.

1. Preposition is used at the end of the sentence if the object is Relative Pronoun ‘That’.

e.g.,     This is the book that you asked **for**.

I know the man that you are talking **to**.

This is the house I lived **in**.

This is the book you are looking **for**

1. If the object is Interrogative Relative Pronoun (who, whom, whose, which, what); Preposition is used at the end of the sentence (***in casual conversation***).

* **To** *whom* should I give a high five? (Casual)
* *Who* should I give a high five **to**? (Formal)
* *Which* journal was your article published **in**?  (**Formal**)
* **In** *which* journal was your article published?  (**Casual**)

**Relations shown by prepositions-**

**Prepositions of Direction.** Refers to a direction-

“**to**” indicates physical distance or “implies movement in the direction of the goal”

“**onto**” signifies movement toward a surface

“**into**” signifies movement toward the interior of a volume

**Examples**:

* She drove *to* the store.
* Come right *in(to)* the house.
* Drive *on(to)* the road and park the car there.

**Prepositions of Time-** To refer to one point in time- "in," "at," and "on."

"**in**" is used with parts of the day (not specific time), months, years, and seasons.

* He reads *in* the evening.
* The weather is cold *in* December.
* She was born *in* 1996.

"**at**" is used with the time of day. Also, "at" is used with noon, night, and midnight.

* I go to work *at* 8:00.
* He eats lunch *at* noon.
* She often goes for a walk *at* night.

"**on**" is used with days.

* I work *on* Saturdays.
* He does laundry *on* Wednesdays.

"**since**", "**for**", "**by**", "**during**", "**from**…**to**", "**from**…**until**", "**with**" and "**within**" - used to refer to extended time.

* I have been living in Delhi *since* 2005. (I moved there in 2005 and still live there.)
* He will be in Toronto *for* 3 weeks. (He will spend 3 weeks in Toronto.)
* She will finish her homework *by* 6:00. (She will finish her homework sometime between now and 6:00.)
* He works part time *during* the summer. (For a period of time throughout the summer.)
* I will collect data *from* January *to* June. (Starting in January and ending in June.)
* They are in school *from* August *until* May. (Starting in August and ending in May.)
* She will graduate *within* 2 years. (No longer than 2 years.)

**Prepositions of Place-** Used to refer to a place. The choice of preposition is (often) governed by the way we see an object, i.e. whether we see it-

"**in**" (the place seen as an AREA)

"**at**"(the place seen as a POINT)

"**on**" (the place seen as a LINE or SURFACE)

* They will meet *in* the lunchroom.
* She was waiting *at* the corner.
* He left his phone *on* the bed.

"**over**" "**above**" - used to refer to an object higher than a point.

"**below**" "**beneath**" "**under**" "**underneath**" - used to refer to an object lower than a point-

* The bird flew *over* the house.
* The plates were on the shelf *above* the cups.
* Basements are dug *below* ground.
* There is hard wood *beneath* the carpet.
* The squirrel hid the nuts *under* a pile of leaves.
* The cat is hiding *underneath* the box.

"**by," "near," "next to," "between," "among," "opposite**," - used to refer to an object close to a point.

* The gas station is *by* the grocery store.
* The park is *near* her house.
* Park your bike *next to* the garage.
* There is a deer *between* the two trees.
* There is a purple flower *among* the weeds.
* The garage is *opposite* the house.

**Prepositions of Spatial Relationships-** Used to refer to a spatial relationship, i.e.it deals with where the subject of the sentence is or where the action is taking place.

"above," "across," "against," "ahead of," "along," "among," "around," "behind," “toward,” "round,” “down,” “past,” "through," "within."

**Examples-**

* Write your name **above** the line
* The Post Office is **across** the street from the school.
* She leans **against** the page.
* The girl is **ahead of** the boy
* We will stop at many stations **along** the way.
* He is **among** the trees
* Draw a circle **around** the answer
* The kids are hiding **behind** the tree.
* Walk **toward** the garage and then turn left.
* Place a check mark **within** the box.
* My favorite restaurant is **round** the corner.
* The best Hotel in town is **down** the road.
* The garage is **past** the market.
* There is a beautiful cottage **through** the trees.

**Some commonly confused prepositions**

**In**/**Into** - shows the existing state of things;

**In** talks about position, **; Into** shows movement.  
i. He jumped into the river.  
ii. There are three students in the class.

**To/Into-**

**To** used to indicate **in the direction, direction** -

* Turn **to** the right.
* I am going **to** Jaipur.

**Into** used to indicate **inside** of, **change** in condition

* We stepped **into** the room.
* The boy changed **into** a man.

**On/Onto**

**On** - used for both existing position and movement.

(a) He was sitting on his bag.

(b) Snow fell on the hills.

**Onto** - used when there is movement involving a change of level.

(a) People climbed onto their roofs.

(b) He lifted her onto the table.

**With/By**

**With** - used for instruments; **By** - used for agents.

(a) The snake was killed by him with a stick.

(b) The letter was written by Suresh with a pencil.

**Since/For/From**

**Since** - used when specifying the starting point;

**For** - used when specifying the amount of time (how long).

(a) It has been raining since two O’Clock.

(b) He had been ill since Monday.

(c) I've had this watch **for** more than 40 years.

(d) I've only known her **for** a few weeks.

**Beside/Besides**

**beside** = at the side of; **besides** = in addition to / as well as

**a)** He was sitting beside Sarla.

**b)** He has a car besides a motor cycle.

**Between/Among**

**Between** - used for ‘two things or persons, also used when we have a definite number; **Among** - used for more than two persons or things when we have no definite number in mind.

* He distributed his property between his two daughters.
* He was happy to be among friends again.

**Same word as different part of speech**

* as a **conjunction** (connecting two clauses), joins words, phrases, or clauses.
* as a **preposition** (followed by a noun), links nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence.
* as an **adverb** (followed by an adjective, an adverb), modifies or describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.
* an **adjective (**modifies a noun or a pronoun) that is, it provides more detail about a noun; usually occur just before the nouns they modify.

**Examples**:

**above:**

* The moral law is **above** the civil. **(Preposition)**
* She stared up at the stars **above**. (**Adverb**)
* Please reply to the **above** address**. (Adjective)**

**after**:

* I went for a swim **after breakfast**. (**Preposition**)
* They arrived soon **after (Adverb**)
* We went away **after** they had left. (**Conjunction)**

**as**:

* His colleagues regard him **as** a genius. (**Preposition**)
* We walked **as** fast as we could. (**Adverb**)
* **As** he was poor, I helped him. (**Conjunction**)

**before**:

* He came **before** the appointed time.
* (**Preposition**)
* I have seen you **before.** (**Adverb**)
* He went away **before** I came.
* (**Conjunction**)

**but:**

* She had never fallen in love with anyone **but** her childhood friend. (**Preposition**)
* We have **but** one week to apologize to her or she will sue. (**Adverb**)
* You are not only my best friend **but** also my only bodyguard. (**Conjunction**)

**since**:

* She has been crying **since** yesterday. (**Preposition**)
* I have not seen him **since.** (**Adverb**)
* **Since** there's no help, come, let us shake hands and part. (**Conjunction**)

**till**:

* Never put off **till** tomorrow what you can do today. (**Preposition)**
* Do not start **till** I give the word. (**Conjunction**)

**References**

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G. Leech & J. Svartvik. 2017. A communicative grammar of English. Routledge: New York.