

THE PREPOSITION

The **preposition** is a part of speech which denotes the relations between objects and phenomena. It shows relationships in time and space and relationships between ideas (logical relationships). Many words that can be used as prepositions can also be used as adverbs, but not all of them can. A preposition in a prepositional phrase is always followed by a noun, a pronoun, or another word that can replace a noun, such as an -ing form (Gerund). An object form of a personal pronoun after a preposition is used.

As to their **morphological structure** prepositions fall under the following groups:

simple (*in, on, at, for, with, etc.*);

derivative (*behind, below, across, along, etc.*);

compound (*inside, outside, within, without, etc.*);

composite (*because of, in front of, in accordance with, etc.*).

The **lexical meaning** of some prepositions is quite concrete (e.g. *in, below, between, before, after, till, etc.*), while that of some other prepositions may be weakened to a great extent (e. g. *to, by, of*).

For instance, the preposition *to* generally indicates direction or movement towards something:

*Every night Sissy went **to** Rachel's lodging, and sat with her in her small neat room. (Dickens)*

But in some cases the lexical meaning of the preposition *to* is weakened.

*... all the house belongs **to** me, or will do in a few years. (Ch. Bronte)*

Some prepositions are **polysemantic** and may express different relations; e. g. *for*:

*Never once had Erik sensed the struggle **for** life. (Wilson)* (purpose)

*Even when their eyes had met and her sister had approached the bed, Louisa lay **for** minutes looking at her in silence... (Dickens)* (time)

*She could scarcely move her head **for** pain and heaviness, her eyes were strained and sore, and she was very weak. (Dickens)* (cause)

Some prepositions are **homonymous with adverbs and conjunctions**.

For instance, the prepositions *after* and *before* are homonymous with the

*This letter seemed to afford her peculiar satisfaction; she read it through twice **before** replying to the landlady. (Mansfield)* (preposition)

Though identical in form, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions are different parts of speech. The adverb, unlike the preposition and conjunction, serves as part of the sentence, e. g. after is an adverbial modifier of time, etc.

Some prepositions (*on, in, by, over, off, up*) are **homonymous with postpositions**.

A preposition as well as a postposition does not perform any independent function in the sentence. But while a preposition denotes the relation between objects and phenomena, a postposition is part of a composite verb.

Usually the preposition **is not stressed** and stands before the word it refers to.

*Desert moved quickly **to** the windows. (Galsworthy)*

Sometimes, however, a preposition may be separated from the word it refers to and placed at the end of the sentence or clause. In that case it **is stressed**.

*But he sounds as though he knows what he's talking **about**. (Wilson)*

The preposition may be **weakly stressed** before a pronoun.

*She wrote the words **to** them herself, and other poems. (Galsworthy)*

The preposition is stressed when its meaning is emphasized.

*The book was **in** the table, not **on** it.*

According to their **meaning** prepositions may be divided into prepositions of **place** and **direction**.

at a point/place *I met her **at** the bus stop.*

on a surface *The book is **on** the desk.*

in an area or space *Malawi is a country **in** Africa.*

up / down into / out of
over/above in front of /behind

NOTE: **Over/above** are often synonymous, so are **under/below**, but **over** and **under** sometimes suggest movement.

*When we flew **over** Paris we couldn't see much because we were above the clouds. Below us was the river which ran **under** the bridge.*

Practice

1. Fill in each space in the following sentences with the right preposition of place.

- 1) She lives [at] 43 Duke Road.
- 2) We sat [on] the floor.
- 3) He's [at] work (i.e. not home).
- 4) She lives [in] Milan.
- 5) Our house is between two shops and it is [near] a bus stop; you just go [across] the road and walk along.
- 6) The key's [in] my pocket.
- 7) Put it [in] the box.
- 8) They're [at] a party tonight.
- 9) He's [in] the kitchen.
- 10) Below us was the river which ran [under] the bridge.

2. Add the appropriate preposition of place to these phrases.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) [on]... the corner of the road | 11) [in]... the streets |
| 2) [at]... the back | 12) [at]... work all day |
| 3) [at]... the crossroads | 13) [in]... the open air |
| 4) [on]... the television | 14) [at]... home |
| 5) [on]... a journey | 15) [in]... the park |
| 6) [at]... the bus stop | 16) [on]... a chair |
| 7) [at]... hospital | 17) [at]... the door |
| 8) [in]... Europe | 18) [in]... a queue |
| 9) [on]... Earth | 19) [at]... the bottom |
| 10) [in/to]... the north | 20) [at]... the top |

noun/gerund: **On** *departure /departing, she ... = When she departed, she...*

In a period of time:

- some time during that period: **in** *the morning, in February, in 1994;*
- at the end of a stated period: *I'll be ready in five minutes.* (five minutes from now);
- the length of time that something takes: *I read the book in two and a half hours.*

By a time, date, period, not later than that time: *You must be here by 7 o'clock.*

before a time, date, period, event: *I never go to bed before midnight.*

after a time, date, period, event: *I'll phone you after lunch.*

since a point in time, from that time now or until a point in the past: *We've been here since Tuesday. It was the end of the summer. They had been there since June.*

For a period of time: *They've been together for three years.*

during a named period or an event: *We always work hard during the summer.*

until/ till a point in time, the point in time at which the action finished: *We slept until/ till 8.00. We didn't wake up until/ till 8.00.*

From a time to / until/till a time: *We slept from 11.30 to 1 until 1 till 8.00.*

Practice

1. Fill in each space in the following sentences with *in, at* or *on*.

1) I get up early [in]... the morning and go to bed late [at]... night.

2) I'm so bored. There's nothing to do [at]... weekends.

3) He went swimming [on]... Sunday morning, and [in]... the evening he play squash.

4) I love going for walks [in] summer. It's still light [at]... nine o'clock.

- 3) We lived in Bristol [for]... three years.
- 4) I went to college three years [ago]...
- 5) I found a flat on my own [-]... last year.
- 6) I usually go home [at]... the weekend.
- 7) I didn't come home early [on]... weekdays.
- 8) They arrived [at]... three o'clock [in]... the afternoon.
- 9) [on]... Saturday evening we went out to a concert.
- 10) [when]... we got home we listened to some music.
- 11) We got up late [on]... Sunday morning.
- 12) [in]... the afternoon we went for a walk.
- 13) I bought a car a few weeks [ago]...
- 14) I had an accident [-]... last night.
- 15) It happened [at]... 7.00 [in]... the evening.

3. Fill in each space in the following sentences with the right preposition.

- 1) I lived in Paris ... five years, ... 1970 ... 1975.
- 2) Beethoven began his musical education ... the age of five.
- 3) We never see our cat. ... the day it sleeps, and it goes out ... night.
- 4) I don't usually go out ... the evening, except ... Monday evening, when I go to play snooker.
- 5) Generations of my family have lived in the same house ... 1800.
- 6) A: How long are you staying here?
B: ... the end of the month. Then I have to go home.
- 7) I mustn't forget my library books. I must take them back ... the 24th.
- 8) I'm just going out to get a newspaper. If anyone rings, tell them I'll be back ... a few minutes.
- 9) Are you going away ... Easter, or are you staying at home?
- 10) I met my husband in Wales. ... the time, I was working in a travel agent's.

4. Add the appropriate preposition of time to these phrases.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) ... present | 11) ... the beginning |
| 2) ... arrival | 12) ... a moment |
| 3) ... 6.30 pm | 13) ... last |
| 4) ... the afternoon | 14) ... the year 2000 |
| 5) ... Wednesday afternoon | 15) ... her birthday |

- We say *at night*. But we can also say *in the night* meaning during.
- We often use *last / this / next* with time words: *We didn't go on holiday **last** summer. I'm going home **this** weekend. I'll see you **next** Monday.*
- *During* versus *for*. *We rented a cottage **for** the summer. He became ill **during** the summer. We spend all our time outside **during** the summer.*
- *During* versus *in*. They can both be used to refer to something that happens throughout a time period, from its beginning to its end, and so it is often possible to use either *during* or *in*: *It's very cold here **during** / **in** the winter.*

But

- We use *in* and not *during* when we want the time reference to sound more specific. So, for example, if we are contrasting one period of time with another, we use *in*: *I last saw you **in** May, not July.*
- We use *during* when we want to stress the idea of duration. *She felt miserable **during** the whole of that summer.*
- When the time reference is an activity rather than a time period, we use *during*: *She didn't speak once **during** the meal.*

Practice

1. Fill in each space in the following sentences with *while, during* or *for*.

- 1) I fell and hurt myself ... I was playing tennis.
- 2) It started to rain ... the match.
- 3) We played tennis ... two hours.
- 4) I worked in Italy ... three years.
- 5) ... the summer I stayed on a farm in Tuscany.
- 6) I learned Italian ... I was there.
- 7) We went on holiday to Florida ... three weeks.
- 8) ... the day it was very hot, but it was cool at night.
- 9) We went to Disneyland ... we were there.
- 10) We had a lovely meal yesterday. We sat at the table ... three hours.
- 11) ... the meal we exchanged news.
- 12) ... I was talking to Barbara, I learned that Tony was in hospital.
- 13) They rented a villa ... a month.
- 14) Children got lots of presents ... Christmas.
- 15) Fighting broke out between rival fans ... the match.

through Zimbabwe. She heard a noise ... the night, but paid no attention.

3. Fill in each space in the following sentences with the right preposition.

- 1) I'd love to be able to visit every country ... the world.
- 2) "Have you read any books ... Margaret White?" "No, I've never heard of her."
- 3) "Is there a bank near here?" "Yes, there's one ... the end of this road."
- 4) Tim is away at the moment. He's ... holiday.
- 5) You've got a dirty mark ... your cheek. Have a look ... the mirror.
- 6) We went ... a party ... Linda's house on Saturday.
- 7) Bombay is ... the west coast of India.
- 8) Look at the leaves ... the tree. They're a beautiful colour.
- 9) "Have you ever been ... Tokyo?" "No, I've never been ... Japan."
- 10) Mozart died ... Vienna in 1791 ... the age of 35.
- 11) "Are you ... this photograph?" "Yes, that's me, ... the left."
- 12) We went ... the theatre last night. We had seats ... the front row.
- 13) "Where's the light switch?" "It's ... the wall ... the door."
- 14) What time did you arrive ... the party?
- 15) I couldn't decide what to eat. There was nothing ... the menu that I liked.
- 16) We live ... a tower block. Our flat is ... the fifteenth floor.
- 17) "What did you think of the film?" "Some parts were a bit stupid but ... the whole I enjoyed it."
- 18) When you paid the hotel bill, did you pay ... cash or ... credit card?
- 19) "How did you get here? ... the bus?" "No, ... car."
- 20) A: "I wonder what's ... television this evening. Have you got a newspaper?"
B: "Yes, the TV programmes are ... the back page."

Prepositions of position and movement

(away) from /	a place	<i>I'll meet you at the station. We walked from the station</i>
at/to		<i>to the cinema.</i>

out of/ in / in	a place	<i>I'll wait for you in the car. Could you get in(to) the</i>
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• arrive *at* / *in* a place
get *to* / *into* a place
get *in* (without place)
in as an adverb: *When does the train get in?*

• *on* a train, bus, plane
in a car

Practice

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1. Fill in each space in the following sentences with *in*, *on*, *at*, *to* or *into*.

- 1) ... the morning we went ... the museum and then had lunch ... the cafeteria.
- 2) Look! You have mud ... your shoes. Wipe them the mat before you come ... the house.
- 3) They went ... the restaurant and sat down ... a corner table.
- 4) I've got to go ... town this morning but we can meet later ... the morning ... John's house.
- 5) It says ... the newspaper that they're getting married ... the spring ... a small church ... the island of Santorini.
- 6) There I was, sitting ... the waiting-room when who do you think came ... the room?
- 7) Tuesday morning, I'm going .. town to put some money ... my bank account.
- 8) The coffee's ... the table and there's some sugar ... the cupboard if you want some.
- 9) The film starts ... eight o'clock and I'd like to be ... the cinema ... time to see the start of the film.
- 10) Mr Fisher is ... Boston now but he'll be ... his way back ... London ... a couple of days' time.
- 11) I saw Jessica ... Oxford Street ... Friday afternoon and she told me she's still university.
- 12) Is there anything ... the television this evening? Have a look in the paper - I think the TV guide is ... the back page.
- 13) She stood up and walked ... the window. She saw a woman sitting ... a bench
throwing a ball ... a dog, who caught it and brought it back ... her

looked up some information ... (6) the encyclopaedia and we found out that the first public zoo ... (7) the world was opened ... (8) Paris ... (9) 1793; this was the famous Jardin des Plantes ... (10) it were animals, of course, but there was also a museum and a botanical garden. The next big zoo to be opened was ... (11) 1829 in Regent's Park ... (12) London. ... (13) Britain, there are now many more zoos. ... (14) Whipsnade Zoo, in Bedfordshire, animals from all parts of the world thrive, free to roam ... (15) the surrounding countryside.

3. Choose the right preposition.

- 1) I saw him riding into town on / by his bicycle yesterday.
- 2) He'd rather go on / by bus than drive there himself, c She sent him home in / by a taxi.
- 3) That's much too far to travel on / in foot.
- 4) Did you take the tunnel to France, or did you go on / in the ferry?
- 5) She rode through town on / by her horse.
- 6) Let's go home in / by taxi - I can't be bothered to walk. h. She sometimes gets sick when travelling on / by sea.
- 7) He flies round the world in / by his own private jet.
- 8) The quickest way to get there is on / by air.
- 9) They arrived in/on the station to see us off.
- 10) My friend is a good driver. He prefers to go everywhere in/by car.
- 11) The train service is very good. The trains are nearly always on/at time.
- 12) It was a confusing situation. Many things were happening at/in the same time.
- 13) I couldn't decide whether or not to buy the sweater. At/In the end I decided not to.
- 14) Ann's birthday is at/in the end of March. I'm not sure exactly which day it is.
- 15) We've got some friends staying with us for/at the moment.

Preposition + noun

by Elton John	<i>A book by Stephen King, a film by Steven Spielberg, a song by Elton John.</i>
for a walk	<i>You can go for a walk, for a drive, for a run, for a swim.</i>
in the morning	<i>You can go in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening.</i>

by mistake,	<i>I took his pen by mistake. (= I thought it was my pen.) I did all the</i>
by myself	<i>work by myself. (= on my own; without help from others.)</i>
by hand	<i>The shoes are made by hand. (= not by machine.)</i>
on strike	<i>The workers are on strike. (= they refuse to work because of a problem over pay, hours, etc.)</i>
by chance	<i>I met them by chance. (= it wasn't planned - it was luck.)</i>
on holiday	<i>The children are on holiday. (= they are having a holiday.)</i>
by accident	<i>He broke the plate by accident. (= he did not want to do it - it was an error/mistake.)</i>
on purpose	<i>He broke the plate on purpose. (= he wanted to do it and intended to do it)</i>
out of work	<i>There are two million out of work. (= without a job.)</i>
at least	<i>There were at least fifty people at the party. (= a minimum of 50.)</i>
on time / in time	<i>Lessons begin at 8.30 and I always arrive on time. (= at 8.30)</i> <i>Lessons begin at 8.30 and I always get there. (= before 8.30; I'm not late.)</i>
in the end / at the end	<i>In the end we went home. (= finally, after a long period.) At the end of the book they get married.</i>
in business / on business	<i>The two men are in business. (= they are businessmen.) The two men are in Germany on business. (= they are there for work and not for a holiday.)</i>
in a moment / at the moment	<i>I'll see you in a moment. (= very soon) I can't speak to you at the moment. (= right now.)</i>

Prepositions used with adjectives and participles

<i>exposed to</i>	<i>sorry for / about</i>
<i>fit for</i>	<i>successful in</i>
<i>fond of</i>	<i>suspicious of</i>
<i>frightened of / at</i>	<i>terrified of</i>
<i>good at/for</i>	<i>tired of</i>
<i>interested in</i>	<i>used to</i>

He was absorbed in his book.

She is afraid/frightened / scared of the dark.

According to Tom it's 2.30. (Tom says it's 2.30.)

He is bad/good at chess, (a bad / good player.)

Running is bad/good for you. (unhealthy / healthy.)

They are very keen on golf.

Drivers exceeding the speed limit are liable to a fine. The management is not responsible for articles left in customers' cars.

I'm sorry for your husband. (I pity him.) I'm sorry for forgetting the tickets. I'm sorry about the tickets.

Prepositions and verbs

<i>accuse sb of</i>	<i>insist on</i>
<i>apologize (to sb) for</i>	<i>live on (food / money)</i>
<i>apply to sb /for sth</i>	<i>long for</i>
<i>ask for / about</i>	<i>object to</i>
<i>attend to</i>	<i>occur to</i>
<i>beg for</i>	<i>persist in</i>
<i>believe in</i>	<i>prefer sb / sth to sb / sth</i>
<i>beware of</i>	<i>prepare for</i>
<i>blame sb for</i>	<i>punish sb for</i>
<i>charge sb with (an offence)</i>	<i>quarrel with sb about</i>
<i>compare sth with</i>	<i>refer to</i>
<i>comply with</i>	<i>rely on</i>
<i>conform to</i>	<i>remind sb of</i>
<i>consist of</i>	<i>resort to</i>
<i>deal in</i>	<i>succeed in</i>

They persisted in defying the law.

When arguments/ailed he resorted to threats.

Prepositions / adverbs

Many words can be used as either prepositions or adverbs:

He got off the bus at the corner, (preposition)

He got off at the corner, (adverb)

The most important of these are **above, about, across, along, before, behind, below, besides, by, down, in, near, off, on, over, past, round, since, through, under, up:**

They were here before six. (preposition)

He has done this sort of work before, (adverb)

Peter is behind us. (preposition)

He's a long way behind, (adverb)

She climbed over the wall, (preposition)

You 'll have to climb over too. (adverb)

When the meeting was over the delegates went home, (ad verb; here *over* = finished)

The shop is just round the corner, (preposition)

Come round (to my house) any evening, (adverb)

He ran up the stairs, (preposition)

He went up in the lift, (adverb)

Many of these words are used to form phrasal verbs: *The plane took off.* (left the ground)

He came round, (recovered consciousness)