

Prepositions and common Prepositional Phrases

..... a practical handout

What is a preposition?

A preposition is a word that shows the relationship between a noun/pronoun and something else (such as a verb, adjective, or another noun/pronoun). These relationships can show time, place, or direction.

Time

Prepositions of time explain when something happens. To talk about one point in time, you can use, **on**, **at**, or **in**.

For example:

On is used to describe days:

- My homework is due **on** Friday.
- I am so glad we are leaving for our trip **on** Wednesday.

At is used with specific times of the day (such as noon, night, midnight, etc.):

- The baby woke up **at** midnight.
- The movie is **at** 4:45 PM.

In is used to describe the parts of the day, months, years, and seasons:

- The dog likes to walk **in** the mornings.
- My birthday is **in** November.
- We were married **in** 2018.
- Halloween is **in** the fall.

You can also use prepositions of time to describe extended periods of time. These prepositions are: **since**, **for**, **by**, **before**, **after**, **until**, **from—to**, and **during**.

For example:

Since describes a specific point in the past until now.

- I have not seen Victoria **since** Friday.

For is used to describe something that happens over a certain period of time.

- We are going to Canada **for** three months.

By is used to identify something that happens no later than a certain time.

- The dog needs to be at the vet **by** 1 PM.

Before is used to describe an event earlier than or before another event.

- I like to pick apples **before** winter.

After describes an event at a later time.

- **After** lunch, we can eat candy.

Until is used to describe an event up to a certain point in time.

- We can play soccer **until** my mom comes to pick me up.

From—to describes a starting point to an ending point.

- We will be in Hawaii **from** Tuesday **to** Saturday.

During is used to describe an event that occurs throughout the duration of another event.

- We ate sushi **during** the movie.

Place

Prepositions of place describe where something happens. The prepositions you can use are: **in, at, on, off, by/beside, under, over, below, above, up, and down.**

For example:

In describes a specific position or state of being inside.

- It is currently raining **in** Madrid.

At is used to describe a general area.

- Sammy is playing **at** the park.

On can be used in many ways:

- To describe the position of something:
 - The bird is **on** my shoulder.
- To describe a certain side (left or right):
 - You can find the lamp **on** your right.
- To describe the current state or process of something:
 - Your marshmallow is **on** fire!
 - My mom is **on** the phone with your mom.
- To describe how two things are touching or in contact with each other:
 - James is surfing **on** the water.
- To describe the placement on transportation:
 - Caitlin is **on** an airplane.

Off is used to describe the separation or detachment from a place.

- Please take your elbows **off** the table.

By/Beside describes the position of something next to something else.

- Your shoes are **by** the front door.
- Stand **beside** Taylor.

Under describes in a lower position.

- Our dog is **under** the table.

Over describes a position above.

- The llama jumped **over** the fence.

Below is used similarly to under. It describes in or to a lower position.

- I wrote my name **below** the line.

Above is used to describe something overhead or higher than something else.

- The airplane soared **above** our heads.

Up describes going from a lower position to a higher one.

- Marnie helped us roll the trashcan **up** the hill.

Down is used to describe going from a higher position to a lower one.

- It was much easier to walk **down** the sidewalk.

Direction

Prepositions of direction describe where to go or how something moves. The main prepositional phrases used for direction are: **across, through, to, into, out of, onto, towards, and from.**

For example:

Across describes coming from the other side.

- We skipped **across** the street.

Through describes from one end/side to another.

- We went **through** the tunnel of love.

To describes the direction toward a person or thing.

- They go **to** bed at 10 PM.

Into is used to describe moving to the inside.

- We went **into** the dark cave.

Out of is used to describe moving from the inside to the outside.

- We jumped **out of** the airplane with a parachute.

Onto describes going to the top of something.

- The dog jumped **onto** the table with muddy paws.

Towards is used to describe moving closer to something.

- When the zombie began running **towards** me, I screamed.

From is used to describe moving away from something.

- Wyatt drove **from** Mississippi in one day.

Other Prepositions

There are a few more prepositions that do not quite fit into the three categories above: **with**, **about**, and **of**.

For example:

With describes the use of or in the presence of something.

- You can see the city **with** the binoculars.
- Jennie is **with** Tony on the mountain.

About is used to describe an estimation or a subject.

- We hiked **about** two miles.
- The book was **about** Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet.

Of can be used to describe belonging to, relating to, or connected to something or someone.

- The queen **of** Denmark is a beautiful woman. (belonging to)
- I have always dreamed **of** marrying Mr. Darcy. (relating to)
- The first page **of** the book bored me to death.

Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases act as adjectives or adverbs in a sentence. The formula for every prepositional phrase is:

Preposition + a noun or pronoun

For example:

With salt
At home
After dinner

Prepositional phrases sometimes have adjectives and/or adverbs in between the prepositions and nouns.

For example:

With pink Himalayan salt

At Marissa's home

After the salmon dinner

Prepositional phrases acting as adjectives answer the question: Which one?

For example:

The shirt in the washing machine needs to be dried as soon as possible!
Which shirt? The one **in the washing machine**.

The paper under your shoe used to be my homework.
Which paper? The one **under your shoe**.

Prepositional phrases acting as adverbs answer the questions: How? When? or Where?

For example:

Stefanie broke her foot by running into the wall.
How did Stefanie break her foot? **By running into the wall**.

Jared kissed me last night after dinner.
When did Jared kiss you? **Last night after dinner**.

The stain on my shirt is from the Jell-O fight.
Where did you get the stain? **From the Jell-O fight**.

References

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