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.

**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.

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

By/Beside describes the position of something next to something else.
  o  Your shoes are by the front door.
  o  Stand beside Taylor.

Under describes in a lower position.
  o  Our dog is under the table.

Over describes a position above.
  o  The llama jumped over the fence.

Below is used similarly to under. It describes in or to a lower position.
  o  I wrote my name below the line.

Above is used to describe something overhead or higher than something else.
  o  The airplane soared above our heads.

Up describes going from a lower position to a higher one.
  o  Marnie helped us roll the trashcan up the hill.

Down is used to describe going from a higher position to a lower one.
  o  It was much easier to walk down the sidewalk.

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**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.
  o  We skipped across the street.

**Through** describes from one end/side to another.
  o  We went through the tunnel of love.

**To** describes the direction toward a person or thing.
  o  They go to bed at 10 PM.

**Into** is used to describe moving to the inside.
  o  We went into the dark cave.

**Out of** is used to describe moving from the inside to the outside.
From is used to describe moving away from something.
  o Wyatt drove from Mississippi in one day.

Onto describes going to the top of something.
  o The dog jumped onto the table with muddy paws.

Towards is used to describe moving closer to something.
  o When the zombie began running towards me, I screamed.

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

About is used to describe an estimation or a subject.
  o We hiked about two miles.
  o 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.
  o The queen of Denmark is a beautiful woman. (belonging to)
  o I have always dreamed of marrying Mr. Darcy. (relating to)
  o The first page of the book bored me to death. (connected to)

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**.

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**References**


Purdue University. (n.d.) *Prepositions for Time, Place, and Introducing Object*. Retrieved from Owl Purdue: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/prepositions/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/prepositions/index.html)

