

Using the Correct Preposition

A **preposition** shows relationships in time and space, and relationships between ideas. Prepositions can also introduce phrases that tell where, when, and to whom in relation to another noun.

Prepositions of Time

AT, ON, and IN:

We use **at** to designate specific times.

The train is due **at** 12:15 p.m.

Leave your message **at** the beep.

We use **on** to designate days and dates.

My brother is coming **on** Monday.

We're having a party **on** the first of July.

We use **in** for nonspecific times during a day, a month, etc.

She likes to jog **in** the morning.

He is going to quit **in** August.

Prepositions of Time:

after	prior to
as (late/early) as	since
at	to
before	till
during	until
for	up to
in	upon
on	

FOR and SINCE:

We use **for** when we measure time in seconds, minutes, hours, etc.

He ran hard **for** seven minutes.

She's lived there **for** seven years.

We use **since** with a specific date or time.

He has worked here **since** 1970.

She has been there **since** two o'clock.

BY and UNTIL:

We use **by** to refer to the time at or before which an action exists.

The train will have arrived **by** then.

We use **until** to show the time at which an action or state will be completed.

They'll be in the library **until** eight o'clock.

Prepositions of Place/Location

AT, ON, and IN:

We use **at** for specific addresses.

She lives **at** 55 Shine Road in Mequon.

Or, **at** for a location.

I left my mom **at** the restaurant.

We use **on** for names of streets, avenues etc.

Her house is **on** Shine Road.

Prepositions of Location: in, at, and on

IN	AT	ON
(the) bed	class	the bed
the bedroom	home	the ceiling
the car	the library	the floor
(the) class	the office	the horse
the library	school	the plane
school	work	the train

Or, **on** referring to a surface.

The painting is **on** the wall at the museum.

We use **in** for the names of land-areas (towns, counties, states, countries, and continents).

She lives **in** Cedarburg.

Cedarburg is **in** Ozaukee County.

Or, **in** for an enclosed space or defined place.

My dog is **in** my car.

I went exploring **in** a cave today.

Tip #1: With words *inside, outside, downstairs, downtown, upstairs, etc.* we use no preposition.

Example: **He went ~~to~~ outside, got in his car, and drove ~~to~~ downtown.**

BETWEEN and AMONG:

Among means within or in the middle of more than two things, people, or events.

I was seated **among** friends at dinner.

The paper was found **among** the books on the desk.

Between means in the space or time that separates two things, people or events

The guests arrived at the wedding **between** 2 and 3 p.m.

I was seated **between** John and Justin at dinner.

Prepositions of Movement

TO:

We use **to** in order to express movement toward a place.

They were driving **to** school together.

She is going **to** the hospital this morning.

Tip #2: *Toward* and *towards* are also helpful prepositions to express movement.

Prepositions of Comparison

BETWEEN, TO, and FROM:

We use **between** when there are two things being compared.

There are many differences **between** the two of you.

We use **to** in order to indicate similarity.

Hockey and soccer are similar **to** each other in many ways.

We use **from** to indicate a difference or contrast.

The weather here is different **from** the weather there.

Prepositions with Predeterminers

When a predeterminer comes before an article, a demonstrative or pronoun, it is separated by the preposition **of**.

Both **of** the big planes were new.

Some **of** her friends were away.

Examples of predeterminers using the preposition of include- all, both, five, some several, most, etc.

Idiomatic Expressions with Prepositions:

You agree... **to** a proposal.
with a person
on a price.

We argue.....**about** a matter.
with a person.
for/against proposition

We part... **from** (a person).
with (a thing).

He was impatient... **for** (something desired)
with (someone)

We were rewarded... **for** (something done).
by (a person).
with (a gift).

We live... **at** an address
in a house or city
on a street
with other people

Common Prepositions with Nouns, Adjectives, and Verbs:

Nouns and Prepositions

approval of
awareness of
belief in
concern for
confusion about
desire for
fondness for
grasp of
hatred of
hope for
interest in
love of
need for
participation in
reason for
respect for
success in
understanding of

Adjectives and Prepositions

afraid of
angry at
aware of
capable of
careless about
familiar with
fond of
happy about
interested in
jealous of
made of
married to
proud of
similar to
sorry for
sure of
tired of
worried about

Verbs and Prepositions

ask about/for
belong to
bring up
care for
coming from
find out
give up
going to
grow up
look for
look forward to
look up
made from
make up
pay for
prepare for
study for
talk about
think about
work for
worry about

Other resources:

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions.htm>

Kirszner, L., & Mandell, S. (Eds.). (2002) The Holt Handbook 6th Ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt College.

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Practice Prepositions Problems

Use **at**, **on**, or **in** to finish the sentences. (Time)

1. She is coming home ____ December 10th.
2. I'll be ready to leave ____ about twenty minutes.
3. You can expect us to come ____ 3 o'clock

Use **since** or **for** to finish the sentences. (Time)

1. My parents have been married _____1975.
2. They have been married _____31 years.
3. We have been waiting _____2 o'clock.

Use **by** or **until** to finish the sentences. (Time)

1. I will wait _____ 6:30, but then I'm going home.
2. Grandpa stayed up _____ two in the morning.
3. He will be back _____the time they return.

Use **at**, **on**, or **in** to finish the sentences. (Location)

1. My best friend lives ____ Port Washington Road.
2. Since he met his new girlfriend, John never seems to be _____ home.
3. She spent the entire summer _____ Japan.

Use **between** or **among** to finish the sentences. (Location)

1. The book is _____ the backpack and the sweatshirt.
2. The pencil was _____ the papers, books, and markers on the floor.
3. She was stuck _____ the door and the wall.

Use **between**, **from**, and **to** in order to finish the sentences. (Comparison)

1. The culture here is very different _____ the culture in your country.
2. Your mother's cooking is very similar _____ the dinners in the cafeteria.
3. There are many similarities _____ you and your sister.

Underline all of the prepositions that describe the relationship of the desk to the professor or to you in the following paragraph.

You can sit before the desk (or in front of the desk). The professor can sit on the desk (when he's being informal) or behind the desk, and then his feet are under the desk or beneath the desk. He can stand beside the desk (meaning next to the desk), before the desk, between the desk and you, or even on the desk (if he's really strange). If he's clumsy, he can bump into the desk or try to walk through the desk (and stuff would fall off the desk). Passing his hands over the desk or resting his elbows upon the desk, he often looks across the desk and speaks of the desk or concerning the desk as if there were nothing else like the desk. Because he thinks of nothing except the desk, sometimes you wonder about the desk, what's in the desk, what he paid for the desk, and if he could live without the desk. You can walk toward the desk, to the desk, around the desk, by the desk, and even past the desk while he sits at the desk or leans against the desk.

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1. The culture here is very different from the culture in your country.
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All of the words in **bold** are examples of prepositions and describe the relationship of the desk to the professor or to you.

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