

Using the Correct Preposition

●Prepositions introduce phrases that tell where, how, why, when, and to whom in relation to another noun. Using different prepositions in the context of a sentence can change the meaning of the sentence.

*The rabbit ran **through** the hollow log.*

*The rabbit ran **over** the hollow log.*

*The rabbit ran **around** the hollow log.*

*The rabbit ran **into** the hollow log.*

*The rabbit ran **on** the hollow log.*

The correct choice of words depends on what the rabbit did. Did it run in and then out of, jump over, circle, or enter the hollow log?

●Confusing Prepositions

To: Use with verbs that show movement such as go, come, and drive

*-Tim is going **to** work*

*-I like going **to** Wisconsin in the fall.*

For: Use with a period of time to express “how long” or the duration of something that has happened:

*-I visited my grandma **for** three days.*

*-I left **for** a month.*

For and **To** can also be used in relations of purpose:

*-We are looking forward **to** the camp. **NOT** We are looking forward **for** the camp.*

*- She is working hard **for** the money. **ALSO** She is working hard **to** earn money.*

*-I am dieting **to** lose weight. **ALSO** I am dieting **for** my health.*

In **to earn** and **to lose**, the preposition is being used as an infinitive with the verb.

Using **At**, **In**, and **On**

-At for a location

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

*Leave your message **at** the beep.*

-In for an enclosed space or defined place

*I was **in** England over the summer.*

*My dog is **in** my car.*

-On for a surface

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

*I sat **on** the chair.*

Traditionally English speakers use the preposition **in** when dealing with an enclosed space, and use the preposition **on** when dealing with mass transportation.

Examples:

*-We go **in** a car. **BUT***

*-We go **on** an airplane and **on** a train.*

●Idiomatic use of Prepositions

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

We argue.....**for** a principle.
with a person.
against an obstacle.

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

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

Our family was rewarded **for** (something done).

with (a gift).

by (a person).

A manager differs **with** (a person) **about** (a question).

(a person) **over** (a question).

from (something or someone).

The teacher was impatient **for** (something desired).

with (someone).

Correct

according to
authority on
different from
unequal to
responsible for
in search of

Incorrect

according with
authority about
different than
unequal for
responsible on
in search for

Practice Preposition Problems

Use **in**, **on**, and **at** to finish the sentences.

1. Five books were _____ the shelf.
2. She lives _____ Center Street _____ Watertown, WI.
3. The radio broadcasts a moving story _____ Monday evening _____ 8:00 pm.
4. I work out _____ my spare time.
5. I bought two cookies _____ the fair.

Use **to** or **for** to finish the sentences.

1. I brought home a dog _____ my daughter.
2. I am going _____ the fair _____ my birthday.
3. I am going away _____ three months.

References

Kirsznner, L., & Mandell, S. (Eds.). (2002) The Holt Handbook 6th Ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt College.
English Grammar. 21 October 2002<http://grammar.englishclub.com/prepositions-at-on-place.htm>