



OWLS Writing Guides: Prepositions

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

A preposition is a word that describes a relationship between other words in a sentence. Prepositions are nearly always combined with other words in prepositional phrases. The usual pattern for a prepositional phrase is a preposition + a determiner + a pronoun or noun (the *object* of the preposition) + any modifiers of the object. This whole phrase acts as a modifier, locating something in time and space, modifying a noun, or telling when or where or under what conditions something happened.

She placed the books (where?) **on** the table (when?) **after** she arrived. They remained there (under what condition?) **until** someone put them (where?) **on** the shelves.

Common prepositions

about	below	during	of	throughout	with	in place of
above	beneath	except	off	till	without	in regard to
across	beside	for	on	to	according to	in spite of
after	besides	from	out	toward	because of	instead of
against	between	in	outside	under	by way of	on account of
around	beyond	inside	over	until	in addition	out of
at	by	into	since	up	to	
before	down	like	through	upon	in front of	
behind		near				

<p>Prepositions of Time: <i>at, on, and in</i></p> <p>We use <i>at</i> to designate specific times. The train is due at 12:15 p.m.</p> <p>We use <i>on</i> to designate days and dates. My brother is coming on Monday. We're having a party on the Fourth of July.</p> <p>We use <i>in</i> for nonspecific times during a day, a month, a season, or a year. She likes to jog in the morning. It's too cold in winter to run outside. He started the job in 1971. He's going to quit in August.</p>	<p>Prepositions of Place: <i>at, on, and in</i></p> <p>We use <i>at</i> for specific addresses. Grammar English lives at 55 Boretz Road in Durham.</p> <p>We use <i>on</i> to designate names of streets, avenues, etc. Her house is on Boretz Road.</p> <p>And we use <i>in</i> for the names of land-areas (towns, counties, states, countries, and continents). She lives in Durham. Durham is in Windham County. Windham County is in Connecticut.</p>
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Prepositions of Location: *in, at, and on* and No Preposition

IN	AT	ON	NO PREPOSITION
(the) bed*	class*	the bed*	downstairs
the bedroom	home	the ceiling	downtown
the car	the library*	the floor	inside
(the) class*	the office	the horse	outside
the library*	school*	the plane	upstairs
school*	work	the train	uptown

* You may sometimes use different prepositions for these locations.

Prepositions of Movement: to and No Preposition

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

They were driving *to* work together.
She's going *to* the dentist's office this morning.

Toward and *towards* express movement. These are variant spellings of the same word; use whichever sounds better to you.
We're moving *toward* the light.
This is a big step *towards* the project's completion.

We use no preposition with the words *home, downtown, uptown, inside, outside, downstairs, upstairs*.
Grandma went upstairs
Grandpa went home.
They both went outside.

Prepositions of Time: for and since

We use *for* when we measure time (seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years).

He held his breath *for* seven minutes.
She's lived there *for* seven years.
The British and Irish have been quarreling *for* seven centuries.

We use *since* with a specific date or time.
He's worked here *since* 1970.
She's been sitting in the waiting room *since* two-thirty.

Prepositions with Nouns, Adjectives, and Verbs, and Idiomatic expressions: Prepositions are sometimes so firmly wedded to other words in common usage that they have practically become one word. This occurs in three categories: nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Memorize these combinations if you find you make errors with them!

NOUNS and PREPOSITIONS

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

ADJECTIVES and PREPOSITIONS

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

VERBS and PREPOSITIONS

apologize for	give up	prepare for
ask about	grow up	study for
ask for	look for	talk about
belong to	look forward to	think about
bring up	look up	trust in
care for	make up	work for
find out	pay for	worry about

Idiomatic Expressions with Prepositions

agree *to* a proposal, *with* a person, *on* a price, *in* principle

argue *about* a matter, *with* a person, *for* or *against* a proposition

compare *to* to show likenesses, *with* to show differences (sometimes similarities)

correspond *to* a thing, *with* a person

differ *from* an unlike thing, *with* a person

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