

Prepositions

A preposition connects one word to another word. They show the relation of a noun, pronoun or other noun substitute to other words in a sentence. Prepositions can indicate direction, location, time, possession and more.

Prepositions include:

Noun (man, school, rock)

Proper Noun/Name (New York, Bob, Jane)

Pronoun (you, him, her, us)

Group Noun (family, gang, crowd)

Gerund or verbs ending in “-ing” (Walking, Talking, Sewing)

A preposition cannot be followed by a verb. If we want to follow a preposition by a verb, we must use the “-ing” form which is really a gerund or verb in noun form.

Ex. When our fish died we were in mourning for months.

“In” is the preposition. “Mourn” is the verb, but we must add “-ing” to make it “mourning.”

Ex 2. If I am not at home it is probably because I am out running.

“Out” is the preposition. “Run” is the verb, but we must add “-ing” to make it “running.”

Out of about 150 prepositions in the English language, the most commonly used prepositions are:

<p>“of”</p>	<p>Some functions of the preposition “of” include: origin, motivation, identity, and inclusion.</p> <p>Ex. I am a man of faith.</p> <p>The preposition “of” lets you know that the man identifies with a belief or religion.</p>
<p>“to”</p>	<p>Some functions of the preposition “to” include: motion, direction, destination, and limit.</p> <p>Ex. I am going to the store.</p> <p>The preposition “to” lets you know that I am going to a specific destination and that I will be moving toward that destination, the store.</p>
<p>“in”</p>	<p>Some functions of the preposition “in” include: inclusion within a space, limitation, purpose, and motion</p> <p>Ex. Doug is in the house.</p>

	<p>The preposition “in” lets you know that Doug’s location in within the house, he is included within that space.</p>
“for”	<p>Some functions of the preposition “for” include: continuance, purpose, and reason</p> <p>Ex. I am knocking on wood for good luck.</p> <p>The preposition “for” lets you know that the reason I am knocking on wood is so that I may have good luck.</p>
“with”	<p>Some functions of the preposition “with” include: accompanying, having, and using.</p> <p>Ex. Jane is going with Bob to the dance.</p> <p>The preposition “with” lets you know that Jane is accompanying Bob to the dance.</p>
“on”	<p>Some functions of the preposition “on” include: to be suspended from, to indicate an encounter, to indicate something being carried, and to indicate location.</p> <p>Ex. The goat was on top of the hill.</p> <p>The preposition “on” lets you know the location of the goat which is on top of the hill.</p>
“at”	<p>Some functions of the preposition “at” include: indicating location, amount, and a state/condition.</p> <p>Ex. Zach was standing at attention.</p> <p>The preposition “at” lets you know what Zach’s state of mind was. He was being attentive, so he stood in an attentive manner.</p>
“by”	<p>Some functions of the preposition “to” include: to indicate something is near something else, indicating a time which something is due, and to indicate authority.</p> <p>Ex. My teacher wants this essay done by ten o’ clock tomorrow morning.</p> <p>The preposition “by” lets you know that the teacher has set a time in which the essay is due, ten o’ clock the next day.</p>

The best way to familiarize yourself with prepositions is through practice. Learn the functions of each preposition and apply them in your sentences. Look up some of the functions of prepositions online by using the reference links at the end of the handout.

Here are some hints to help you use prepositions correctly:

#1

Do not use two or more prepositions at the end of a sentence if you can use only one and mean the same thing.

Correct: Get your feet off the table.

Incorrect: Get your feet off of the table.

#2

The preposition “of” is not a correct substitute for the word “have.”

Correct use: I should have called you.

Incorrect use: I should of called you.

#3

The preposition “between” means there is only two of something. The preposition “among” means there is more than three of something.

Ex. I am between two people.

Ex. I am among the people in a crowd.

#4

The preposition “on” can also indicate time.

Ex. He was born on the 25th of June.

Ex. The train will arrive on New Year’s Day.