

Preposition: definition & Types

Preposition

A preposition is a word that indicates the relationship between a noun and the other words of a sentence. They explain relationships of sequence, space, and logic between the object of the sentence and the rest of the sentence. They help us understand order, time connections, and positions.

Example:

I am going to Canada.

Alex threw a stone into the pond.

The present is inside the box.

They have gone out of the town.

There are a few interesting linguistic facts about preposition.

First, they are a closed class of words which means no new preposition gets added to the language. We use a fixed set of prepositions.

Second, prepositions do not have any other form. They cannot be plural, possessive, inflection, or anything else.

Third, most of the prepositions have many different contextual and natural uses. So, it is easy to be confused about preposition.

Fourth, sometimes a preposition works as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.

Prepositions can be of one, two, three, or even more words. Prepositions with two or more words are called phrasal prepositions.

There are some commonly used phrasal prepositions:

because of, in case of, instead of, by way of, on behalf of, on account of, in care of, in spite of, on the side of, etc.

Types of Preposition

Most of the prepositions have many uses. There are some prepositions which are common in every type of preposition as they function in a versatile way.

- 1) Prepositions of Time
- 2) Prepositions of Place and Direction
- 3) Prepositions of Agents or Things
- 4) Phrasal Prepositions

Prepositions of Time:

Prepositions of time show the relationship of time between the nouns to the other parts of a sentence.

On, at, in, from, to, for, since, ago, before, till/until, by, etc. are the most common preposition of time.

Example:

He started working at 10 AM.

The company called meeting on 25 October.

There is a holiday in December.

He has been ill since Monday.

Prepositions of Time Usage

Prepositions of time show the relationship of time between the nouns to the other parts of a sentence.

Common preposition of time: On, at, in, from, to, for, since, ago, before, till/until, by, etc. are the most common.

AT, ON, IN

AT: At always indicates an exact and specific time.

Example:

I started working at 10 AM.

The movie starts at 6 PM.

The shop closes at 30 AM.

Note: Exceptions are that we say – at the weekend, at night, at Christmas, at Easter, at the moment, etc.

On: On generally indicates a fixed date or a day.

Example:

I'll see her on Friday.

He broke a record on Monday morning.

I have a meeting on 25 October.

In: In generally indicates an indefinite and unspecific time of months, seasons, years, centuries, etc.

Example:

I will get a holiday in December.

Murphy was born in 2001.

I love playing cricket in summer.

Note: Some very common exceptions are – in the morning, in the evening, in the afternoon, in five minutes, in six days, in two years, etc.

FROM....TO , UNTIL, SINCE, FOR

From....to: From....to indicates a fixed time-span with the beginning and the end.

Example:

I worked there from 2010 to 2017.

I usually work from Saturday to Thursday.

I will stay there from 10 AM to 6 PM.

Until/till:

Until/till indicates a specific or unspecific time/event up to a point.

Example:

They will not return until Friday.

Wait for me until I return.

I do not give up until I am succeeded.

I will be there until Monday.

Since:

Since indicates a time-span beginning in a time in the past and still continuing in the present (now).

Example:

Alex has been in the village since Sunday.

He has been suffering from fever since Friday.

Robin and Susan have been friends since childhood.

For:

For indicates a period of time (amount of time) in the past, present or future.

Example:

He stayed there for four days.

I will be staying there for five months.

I will work with them for a year.

He was standing there for a long time.

BEFORE, AFTER, DURING, BY

Before: Before indicates a prior event/ period of time from a point.

Example:

Robin was very nervous before the interview.

I want to leave before lunch.

These batsmen should not get out before the tea break.

Before going, close all the window.

After: After indicates a following event/period of time from a point. This preposition is the exact opposite of before.

Example:

Robin felt confident after the interview.

I want to leave after lunch.

After playing football, we went home.

During: During indicates a period of time throughout the course or duration of any event or action.

Example:

Robert was sleeping during the film.

They don't talk during dinner.

I don't usually smoke during office time.

By: By means 'within the extent or period of; during' something.

Example:

I will complete the assignment by Sunday.

He will return by 6 PM.

I will submit the list by 11 AM.

Prepositions of Places & Direction Usage

Prepositions of place show the relationship of place between the nouns to the other parts of a sentence.

On, at, in, by, from, to, towards, up, down, across, between, among, through, in front of, behind, above, over, under, below, etc. are the most common prepositions of place/direction.

Example:

He is at home.

He came from England.

The police broke into the house.

I live across the river.

Prepositions of place show the relationship of place between the nouns to the other parts of a sentence.

Common prepositions of places & direction: On, at, in, by, from, to, towards, up, down, across, between, among, through, in front of, behind, above, over, under, below, etc. are the most common.

IN, AT

IN: In indicates something to be present in a place or enclosure. It does not say particularly where but gives an enclosure to the noun it connects with.

Example:

Your shirt is in the closet. (Does not indicate an exact place)

He lives in Australia.

Alex works in that building.

AT: At indicates an exact place.

Example:

He is at the door.

I am standing at 13/4 George Street.

He is at home.

ON, ABOVE, OVER

ON: On indicates a position above but touching the object.

Example:

The phone is on the table. (Phone is touching with the table)

He is on the third floor.

Sit on the sofa.

ABOVE:

Above indicates a much higher position than the preposition on does. It also indicates something out of reach.

Example:

The sky is above my head.

Hold your hands above your head.

Stars are above the sky.

OVER

Over means a position between on and above which is not touching.

Example:

There are clouds over the hills.

A bird flew over my head.

My flat is over that shop.

UNDER, BELOW

UNDER:

Under is the opposite of on and means ‘below the surface of’ something.

Example:

The cat is under the table.

The carpet under my feet is very soft.

That book is under my glasses.

BELLOW:

Below indicates something at a slightly lower position than what under indicates.

Example:

I have a scar just below my right eye.

Do you see the line below the paper?

Please, don’t write below this line.

TO, FROM

TO:

To indicates a motion in the direction of a place.

Example:

He went to college.

We are going to Mexico.

We walked from the farm to the beach.

FROM

From indicates the point of place at which a motion, journey, or action starts.

Example:

He came from England.

We walked from the beach to the farm.

He drove here from Atlanta.

INTO, OUT OF

INTO:

Into indicates a motion towards/going inside something. It has many uses.

Example:

He came into the house.

The police broke into the bar.

My car crashed into a street sign.

OUT OF: Out of means the opposite of into. It indicates a motion towards outside of something.

Example:

He is going out of the town.

Get out of my house.

Please, remain out of this. (Not indicating a place but an issue)

THROUGH, ACROSS, BESIDE, IN FRONT OF, BEHIND, TOWARDS, BY

THROUGH:

Through indicates a motion in the middle of something.

Example:

We drove through the tunnel.

They came through a forest.

He came through a wedding gate.

ACROSS:

Across means going to the other side of a river or road or something straight.

Example:

He went across the river.

I walked across the road.

My house is across the bank. (There is a road between the house and the bank)

BESIDE:

Beside means at the side of/ next to something.

Example:

The car beside the cycle is mine.

He is standing beside the shop.

I will always be beside you.

IN FRONT OF

In front of means a position facing someone/something.

Example:

He parked his car in front of my house.

I have a pool in front of my resthouse.

He was nervous in front of me.

BEHIND:

Behind means at the far side of something (might be out of sight). It is opposite of in front of.

Example:

He parked his car behind my car.

I have a pool behind my house.

Go behind that tree.

TOWARDS:

Towards means a motion in the direction of something literary or metaphorically.

Example:

Take five steps towards the post and stand there.

They moved towards the Labour Party.

I walked towards the car when you were standing.

BY

By means 'near to or next to' something or someone.

Example:

He has a house by the river.

I was standing by the car.

My flat is by the saloon.

UP, DOWN

UP:

Up means a motion towards a higher place or position.

Example:

We were climbing up the mountain.

Lift your hands up.

John is going up to London. (From a lower place of the country)

Climb up the stairs.

DOWN:

Down indicates the opposite meaning of up. It means a motion towards a lower place or position.

Example:

He was walking down the river.

I am climbing down the hill.

Go down the stairs.

BETWEEN, AMONG

BETWEEN:

Between indicates something/someone to be in the middle of two other things or persons.

Example:

Alex is sitting between Robin and Robert.

The cat is between the two boxes.

This matter is between you and him.

Among:

Among indicates something/someone to be in the middle of three or more other things or persons.

Example:

Alex is sitting among the patients.

He is the best among them.

Among all the people, John had the courage to speak up.

Prepositions of Agents or Things:

Prepositions of agents or things indicate a casual relationship between nouns and other parts of the sentence.

Of, for, by, with, about, etc. are the most used and common prepositions of agents or things.

Example:

This article is about smartphones.

Most of the guests have already left.

I will always be here for you.

He is playing with his brothers.

Phrasal Prepositions:

A phrasal preposition is not a prepositional phrase, but they are a combination of two or more words which functions as a preposition.

Along with, apart from, because of, by means of, according to, in front of, contrary to, in spite of, on account of, in reference to, in addition to, in regard to, instead of, on top of, out of, with regard to, etc. are the most common phrasal prepositions.

Example:

They along with their children went to Atlanta.

According to the new rules, you are not right.

In spite of being a good player, he was not selected.

I'm going out of the city.