Prepositions

Prepositions are used to show relationships between a noun and another word. They are frequently used to locate nouns in time or space. Meanings of prepositions change in very subtle ways and the reasons for these changes are often difficult to explain. The common ways that prepositions are used are often absorbed as a person grows up and learns language. Therefore, there are few rules to memorize. Understanding the common prepositional patterns takes a lot of time and practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commonly Used Prepositions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>about before except of throughout</td>
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<tr>
<td>above behind from off till</td>
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<tr>
<td>across below in on to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after beneath into onto toward</td>
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<tr>
<td>against beside like over up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>along between near put up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among beyond like put within</td>
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<tr>
<td>around by next prepare without</td>
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Prepositions come before nouns or pronouns. The noun that follows the preposition is its object.

- Apples grow on trees.
  ↓ ↓ ↓
  Preposition  Object

A preposition plus a verb forms a phrasal verb.

- Ripe apples fall off the tree.
  ↓
  Phrasal Verb

A prepositional phrase is the preposition plus its object and any modifying words.

- The farmer harvested the apple crop from the south orchard.
  ↓
  Prepositional phrase

Some prepositional phrases modify nouns; some modify verbs.

- The apples from the farm were used to bake a delicious pie.
  ○ From the farm answers the question “which apples?” Therefore, from the farm modifies the noun apples.

- The apple fell from the tree.
  ○ From the tree answers the question how, when or where it fell? Therefore, from the tree modifies the verb fell.

AESL Tips:

*Use a dictionary.* Look up the definition of the preposition. Is the meaning of the preposition appropriate to express the idea that you are developing in the sentence?

Many phrasal verbs and prepositional phrases are idiomatic. Idioms are informal expressions formed from the combination of words that when put together take on a new meaning. Using a dictionary to define the words that make up these phrases is usually ineffective. *Ask a native speaker to explain* the idiom.

Another strategy for absorbing the common uses of prepositions is to *read high quality magazine articles*. Select a paragraph from an article and read it out loud to engage the senses of sight and sound. Using these sensory tools together increases the input of prepositional patterns into memory.
Common Patterns to Indicate Location in Place:

In ☐ Above ☐ Behind ☐ Below ☐ Beside ☐ On ☐

To indicate points higher use: *above, over, up*

To indicate points lower use: *below, beneath, down, under, underneath*

- People get **on** a bus, train, plane but they get **in** a car.
- They get **on** a bike, motorcycle, or horse
- They get **on** a big boat and **in** a small boat.

People live **in** a town, state, or country
But they live **on** a street
**At** a specific address

Example: I live at number 25 on Main Street in Newtown, Pennsylvania.

Common Patterns to Indicate Location in Time

An event happens **in** a month, year, or season........... Tax returns have to be filed **in** April **in** 2012.

An event happens **on** a day, **on** a date......................... Tax returns are due **on** Thursday **on** April 15.

An event happens **at** a specific time ......................... The tax accountant will meet you **at** 7:00pm.

- **In** a 24 hour period (in a minute, in an hour), **in** the morning, afternoon, or evening
- **At** night, noon, midnight,
- **During, since, from-to, until** refers to extended time

Sometimes

- **For** indicates a reason or purpose.................................I went to the movie **for** some amusing distraction.
- **With** indicates a relationship or connection.................................My brother went **with** me.
- **Of** indicates a smaller part within a larger unit............................We enjoyed the beginning **of** the movie.
- **To and from** indicate movement..........................My brother carried the soda and popcorn **from** the concession area.
- **Off and out** indicate separation.................................When we walked **out** of the theatre our eyes had to adjust.