

# 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.

Commonly Used Prepositions				
about	before	except	of	throughout
above	behind	for	off	till
across	below	from	on	to
after	beneath	in	onto	toward
against	beside	inside	out	under
along	besides	into	out of	until
among	between	like	outside	up
around	beyond	near	over	upon
as	by	next	since	with
at	down		through	within
	during			without

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*:

---



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.