

PREPOSITIONS AND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

A **preposition** gives *position* in space or time. A **prepositional phrase** includes a **preposition** and the **object** of the **preposition**, a noun or a pronoun. A **prepositional phrase** acts as an adjective or adverb and can answer questions like which one, what kind of, how many, when, or where.

For example, "We were driving." is a complete sentence; however, "We were driving (**in** Dad's new car) (**to** the video store) (**at** noon) (**on** Tuesday)." is much clearer and more descriptive with the prepositional phrases (shown in parentheses) that tell the reader specifically which car, where, and when we were driving.

Some Common Prepositions

about	above	across	after	against	along	among
around	at	before	behind	below	beneath	beside
between	beyond	by	during	except	for	from
in	inside	into	like	near	of	off
on	onto	outside	over	past	through	to
toward	under	up	upon	with	within	without

Some prepositions of TIME: *at, after, on, in, for*

Use "at" for a specific clock time

- The train is due **at** 12:15 p.m.

Use "on" for a specific day or date

- She went **on** Friday, May 2.

Use "for" for a specified length of time

- He stayed under **for** three minutes.
- She's been gone **for** two years.

Some prepositions of PLACE: *at, on, in*

Use "at" for a specific address

- He lives **at** 55 Wilson Drive.

Use "on" for a street

- He lives **on** Wilson Drive.

Use "in" for cities, states, countries and continents

- She lives **in** Palm Beach.
- Palm Beach County is **in** Florida.
- Florida is **in** the United States.
- The U. S. is **in** North America.

Some prepositions of MOVEMENT: *to, toward*

For expressing movement to or toward a place:

- They were driving **to** work together.
- We're rowing **toward** the island.
- She's going **to** the dentist's office today.
- This is a step **toward** your project's completion.
- The prisoner was led **to** the gallows.

Some prepositions are not so easily categorized and some are used in more than one way.

To tell if a word is preposition, try it in this sentence: *The airplane flew _____ the clouds. Almost all prepositions will work in this sample.*

Note: You may have learned that ending a sentence with a preposition is not grammatically correct; however, "Be sure to cite the book you are quoting from." is not at all improved with the more proper but awkward, "Be sure to cite from which book you are quoting." Whenever possible, avoid ending sentences with prepositions; however, use your common sense and don't create awkward sentences for the sake of grammatical accuracy.

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LEARN MORE

Successful students seek out and utilize all the resources they can to learn more; save this reference and don't forget: students can always ask tutors or their teachers for an explanation of anything that's not clear.

Texts available to use in the SLC English Writing Lab:

<i>Real Writing with Readings</i> , Susan Anker Pages 276-279; 289; 488-490	<i>Writing First</i> , Second Edition, Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell Pages 216-18; 260; 319-24	<i>The Bedford Handbook</i> , Seventh Edition, Diana Hacker Pages 378-79; 778-779; 797-98	<i>Evergreen</i> , Sixth Edition, Susan Fawcett and Alvin Sandberg Chapter 31, pages 411-417
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The online web sites listed below can be very helpful for students earnestly interested in learning to identify and use prepositions effectively. In addition to explanations, there are dynamic, user-friendly exercises for practice.

[Grassroots Companion Site](#)

[Evergreen Companion Site](#)

[Prepositions: Locators in Time and Place](#)

[Prepositions and Phrasal Verbs](#)

[English as Second Language: Preposition Recognition](#)

[Online Writing Lab: Prepositions Practice](#)

[Grammar Check: Prepositions](#)

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PRACTICE

The paragraph below includes prepositional phrases of time, place and movement. Place parentheses around each one that you can identify, being careful NOT to include any main parts of the sentence. The first two are done for you:

The baby girl was born (at 8:40 AM) (at St. Mary's Hospital) in West Palm Beach on 45th Street in the springtime of the year. Her parents named her Ann and took her to their modest wood-frame house on Tuscaloosa Street on the fourth day after she was born. Her father worked at the downtown post office and her mother was a sales clerk at a well-known pharmacy. Ann and her parents lived across the street from Belvedere Elementary School where Ann walked to school every day. Ann grew up with many friends and cherished pets and enjoyed her childhood in South Florida. She went to college and stayed for four years and graduated with honors. She became an English teacher and had many students who credited her with their success. She married and had children of her own; then she retired and traveled around the world before she died. On her tombstone these words were carved: "Make a contribution to your world; do it now."

In the sentences below, choose the best preposition from the choices given. Circle the best answer.

Bob lives (in/on/at) Ninth Street. We picked him up (in/to/at) 6 p.m. He was late, and we waited (in/on/for) twenty minutes. Since he met his girlfriend, he never seems to be (on/in/at) home. He responded to our complaints (to/with/by) yelling (at/to/by) us. We ended up going (for/by/to) the game late and later ran (into/onto/by) some friends who gave us a ride (by/at/to) my house. My parents were worried (on/by/about) me; they had heard (at/on/by) the news (like/about/in) an accident (in/on/for) I-95.

My parents have been married (since/for/until) twenty-five years. They usually travel (by/at/to) California (to/in/for) the summer. They like to travel (by/at/with) train, and sometimes they travel (to/with/for) many days to get there.

What are the main ingredients (with/in/about) this casserole? I want (on/for/by) my grandfather's birthday dinner. My sister will copy the recipe (on/in/by) her computer.