



# Categories of prepositions

## What are prepositions?

Prepositions link nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence. The word or phrase that the preposition introduces is called the 'object' of the preposition. Here are some commonly used prepositions:

about	below	excepting	off	toward
above	beneath	for	on	under
across	beside(s)	from	onto	underneath
after	between	in	out	until
against	beyond	in front of	outside	up
along	by	inside	over	upon
among	concerning	in spite of	past	up to
around	despite	instead of	regarding	with
at	down	into	since	within
because of	during	likened	through	without
before	except	near	throughout	with regard to
behind		of	to	with respect to

## Prepositions can be categorised into the following:

- Prepositions of time (See table 1)
- Prepositions of place (See table 2)
- More prepositions (See table 3)



Table 1: Prepositions of time (adapted from Lingo4you 2010)		
Preposition	Usage	Example
on	- days of the week	The lecture is <b>on Friday</b> .
in	- months/seasons - time of day - year - after a certain period of time	The exams are <b>in July</b> .
		I have a study group meeting <b>in the afternoon</b> .
		I graduated from this university <b>in 2011</b> .
		I have to meet my lecturer <b>in two hours</b> .
at	- for night - for weekend - a certain period of time	I usually do my revision <b>at night</b> .
		We got together to work on our project <b>at/on the weekend</b> .
		I submitted my assignment <b>at 2.00pm</b> today.
since	- from a certain period of time (past till now)	I have been working on this report <b>since 8.00am</b> .
for	- over a certain period of time	I will be studying in the library <b>for four hours</b> .
ago	- a certain time in the past	I completed my Arts degree <b>two years ago</b> .
before	- earlier than a certain point of time	I usually work at the cafe <b>before lectures</b> .
to	- telling the time	What time is it? It is <b>quarter to five</b> .
past	- telling the time	Why don't you take a break from your studies? It is <b>half past one</b> and you have not eaten anything since breakfast.
to/till/until	- marking the beginning and the end of the period of time	I will be in the Language Laboratory from <b>8.00am to/till/until 1.00pm</b> .
till/until	- in the sense of how long something is going to last	I will be available for student consultation <b>till/until 4.00pm</b> today.
by	- in the sense of 'at the least' - up to a certain time	I need to complete this essay <b>by 5 o'clock</b> . <b>By 8.00pm</b> , I had revised three topics for the exam.



Table 2: Prepositions of place (adapted from: Lingo4you 2010)

Preposition	Usage	Example
in	- room, building, street, town, country	We met <b>in the seminar</b> room.
	- book, paper, etc.	Can you refer to the quotation <b>in the book</b> ?
	- car, taxi	I dropped my USB stick <b>in the car</b> .
	- picture, world	Wherever you go <b>in the world</b> , you will not find a better teacher.
at	- meaning next to, by an object	I will meet you <b>at the station</b> beside the university.
	- for table	Many serious issues were discussed <b>at the table</b> .
	- for events	We met <b>at the workshop</b> .
	- place where you do something typical (study, work, etc.)	I will try to revise the report <b>at uni</b> .
on	- attached	That is my painting you see <b>on the wall</b> .
	- for a place with a river	Hogwash Bend lies <b>on the Murray River</b> .
	- being on a surface	I left my laptop <b>on the table</b> .
	- for a certain side (left or right)	It would be a good idea to sit <b>on the right</b> side of the screen.
	- for a floor in a house	I am <b>on the bus</b> and will reach the campus in five minutes.
	- for public transport	I saw your advertisement <b>on television</b> .
- for television, radio		
by, next to, beside	- left or right of somebody or something	My lecturer is the person standing <b>by/next to, beside</b> the smartboard.
under	- on the ground lower than (or covered by) something else	You can find the resources <b>under the 'Academic Assignments' banner</b> .
below	- lower than something else but above ground	You need to go <b>below the surface</b> to find the true meaning of that sentence.



Table 3: More prepositions (adapted from: Lingo4you 2010)

Preposition	Usage	Example
across	- getting to the other side (also over)	I <b>walked across the lawn</b> to get to the other side of the campus. I <b>walked across the bridge</b> and saw some beautiful flowers growing on the bank.
through	- something with limits on top, bottom and sides	We had to <b>drive through the tunnel</b> to get to the university.
to	- movement to person or building - movement to a place or country - for bed	I <b>went to the tutor</b> for help. When I graduate, I want to <b>go to Europe</b> . Why don't you <b>go to bed</b> now? You have an early lecture tomorrow.
into	- enter a room or building	The instructor told us to <b>go into the seminar room</b> .
towards	- movement in the direction of something (but not directly to it)	<b>Go towards the cafe</b> and you will see the library.
onto	- movement to the top of something	I was so tired yesterday that I <b>fell onto the bed</b> as soon as I got home.
from	- in the sense of where from	I downloaded an e-book on academic writing <b>from the library</b> .

## References

Lingo4you 2010, *Prepositions*, English Grammar 4U Online, 25 October, viewed 22 December 2014, <<http://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/grammar/prepositions>>.