



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)
- Further prepositions (See table 3)



| Table 1: Prepositions of time (adapted from Lingo4you 2010) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Preposition | Usage | Example |
| on | - days of the week | The lecture is on Friday . |
| in | - months/seasons - time of day - year - after a certain period of time | The exams are in July . |
| | | I have a study group meeting in the afternoon . |
| | | I graduated from this university in 2011 . |
| | | I have to meet my lecturer in two hours . |
| at | - for night - for weekend - a certain period of time | I usually do my revision at night . |
| | | We got together to work on our project at the weekend . |
| | | I submitted my assignment at 2.00pm today. |
| since | - from a certain period of time (past till now) | I have been working on this report since 8.00am . |
| for | - over a certain period of time | I will be studying in the library for four hours . |
| ago | - a certain time in the past | I completed my Arts degree two years ago . |
| before | - earlier than a certain point of time | I usually work at the cafe before lectures . |
| to | - telling the time | What time is it? It is quarter to five . |
| past | - telling the time | Why don't you take a break from your studies? It is half past one 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 8.00am to/till/until 1.00pm . |
| till/until | - in the sense of how long something is going to last | I will be available for student consultation till/until 4.00pm today. |
| by | - in the sense of 'at the least' - up to a certain time | I want this essay completed by 5 o'clock . By 8.00pm , 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 in the seminar room. |
| | - book, paper, etc. | Can you refer to the quotation in the book ? |
| | - car, taxi | I dropped my USB stick in the car . |
| | - picture, world | Wherever you go in the world , you will not find a better teacher. |
| at | - meaning next to, by an object | I will meet you at the station beside the university. |
| | - for table | Many serious issues were discussed at the table . |
| | - for events | We met at the workshop . |
| | - place where you do something typical (study, work, etc.) | I will try to revise the report at uni . |
| on | - attached | That is my painting you see on the wall . |
| | - for a place with a river | Hogwash Bend lies on the Murray River . |
| | - being on a surface | I left my laptop on the table . |
| | - for a certain side (left or right) | It would be a good idea to sit on the right side of the screen. |
| | - for a floor in a house | I am on the bus and will reach the campus in five minutes. |
| | - for public transport | I saw your advertisement on television . |
| | - for television, radio | |
| by, next to, beside | - left or right of somebody or something | My lecturer is standing by/next to, beside the computer where the test should be completed. |
| under | - on the ground lower than (or covered by) something else | You can find the resources under the 'Academic Assignments' banner . |
| below | - lower than something else but above ground | You need to go below the surface to find the true meaning of that sentence. |



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

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

Table 3: Further prepositions (adapted from Lingo4you 2010)

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



References

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

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