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# PREPOSITIONS

A **preposition** is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence.

**Common prepositions**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| about  above  across  after  against  among  around  as  at  before | behind  below  beneath  beside  besides  between  beyond  but  by  despite | down  during  except  for  from  in  inside  into  like  near | next  of  off  on  onto  opposite  out  outside  over  past | to  toward  under  unlike  until  unto  up  with  within  without |

# 

# Prepositional Phrases

A **prepositional phrase** is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun, a pronoun, or a word group serving as a noun. This ending element is called the **object of the preposition.**

The combination of a preposition and a noun or pronoun gives us a prepositional phrase.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **of** many | **after** the game | **to** the house | **for** you |

**Note:** The phrases often include an article (**a, an, the**).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Preposition** | **Prepositional phrase** | **Object of the preposition** |
| in | in **a** house | house |
| from | from **the** market | market |
| with | with **an** antelope | antelope |
| for | for **the** last time | time |

## The indirect object phrase

A prepositional phrase with a hidden preposition is the **indirect object phrase**. An indirect object looks like an object of the verb, but is really an object of the “hidden” preposition **to, for, or of**.

To find if there is an indirect object, use the **indirect object question.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Example:** | Mr. Potter showed Ms. Calendar a better way. |
|  | * *Indirect object question*: **Showed to whom**? |
|  | * *Answer*: To Ms. Calendar |
|  | * *Hidden preposition for indirect object*: Mr. Potter showed **(to)** Ms. Calendar a better way. |

## HOW TO USE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Prepositional phrases are either adjectives or adverbs, so the adjective and adverb questions identify them.

When prepositional phrases act as **adjectives**, they answer one of the following questions:

**Which?**

**What kind?**

**How many?**

**Whose?**

However, most **adjective prepositional phrases**answer the question **which.** For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Example:** | The horse in the third stall is mine. |
|  | * Adjective question: **Which** horse? |
|  | * Answer: The horse **in the third stall.** |

When prepositional phrases act as adverbs, they answer one of the five adverb questions:

**When?**

**Where?**

**Why?**

**How?**

**Under what conditions?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Example:** | We stood in the rain for hours. |
|  | * This sentence has two prepositional phrases used as adverbs. |
|  | * *in the rain* tells us **where** we stood. |
|  | * *for hours* tells us **when** we stood. |

## Where to Use Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases can modify many parts of a sentence and may be found in several places:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Examples:** | **In the big house with his dog at his side,** Mike felt safe. |
|  | I was walking **through the snow**, and I was cold. |
|  | Ali slumped like a broken doll **after the boxing match.** |

# Other Considerations

## Subject of a sentence

A prepositional phrase is never the subject of a sentence. Crossing out the prepositional phrases helps to identify the subject.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Example:** | A student in the class fell asleep during the long lecture. |
|  | * **In** and **during** are prepositions. |
|  | * *Crossing out their prepositional phrases leaves* A student fell asleep. |
|  | * A student ~~in the class~~ fell asleep ~~during the long lecture~~, *therefore* ***student*** *is the subject of the sentence*. |

## Introductory Words of Clauses

Often, prepositions can be used as **introductory words of clauses**, not as prepositional phrases. The clause has a subject and a verb; the phrase does not.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Examples:** | *Introductory independent clause***:** **After I came home**, I went to bed. (Both clauses have a subject and a verb.) |
|  | *Introductory prepositional phrase*: **After the game**, I went to bed. (*After the game* does not have a subject and verb, so it is a prepositional phrase.) |

## Infinitive Phrases

**Infinitive phrases** (**to** plus a verb) cause trouble in identifying prepositional phrases:

* The word **to,** with a noun, creates a **prepositional** phrase, but
* The word **to,**with a verb, creates an **infinitive** phrase.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Examples:** | *Prepositional phrase*: I went to the game. (**game** is a noun, so *to the game* is a prepositional phrase) |
|  | *Infinitive*: I wanted to go. (**go** is a verb, so *to go* is an infinitive) |

## Idioms

**Idioms** are groups of words that do not easily fit the standard rules of grammar. People who "run for office," for example, need not be track stars; rather, this idiom means they are seeking public office.

Combinations of verbs or adjectives and prepositions can be confusing for both native and nonnative English speakers.

**Common idioms**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| from time to time | at all times | in the end | out of season |
| out of the blue | on the other hand | for a living | by the way |

# Exercises

## Practice Exercise A

## Make prepositional phrases out of these words by drawing lines from one column to the other.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| in | the movies |
| over | the water |
| under | the couch |
| at | the ground |

**Tip:** Many of the nouns can be interchanged (**in the movies, in the water, in the ground**). Use prepositional phrases to add details to writing.

## Practice Exercise B

## Underline the prepositional phrases in the following sentences.

**Example:** I needed a bandage for my elbow.

1. During the war, I went to Germany.
2. Through the water, I could see into the ship.
3. To see England was my dream.
4. In the hallway I saw a man going to the office.
5. When he called I ran to the telephone.
6. As soon as I got home, my mom wanted to leave.
7. We went to the baseball game on Saturday.
8. To get to Westport, you need to drive on the highway.

## Practice Exercise C

Mark each adverb prepositional phrase with (parentheses). Identify which of the five adverb questions each prepositional phrase answers:

**When?**

**Where?**

**Why?**

**How?**

**Under what conditions?**

**Example:** The laundry room is located (in the back) (of the house). Adverb question = **Where?**

1. The mail is usually delivered in the morning on Saturdays.
2. She looked at the baby for hours.
3. In a few minutes, the candle will burn out completely.
4. This week our new teacher canceled all of his classes.
5. The students handed in the final copies of their essays.