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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
- behind
- down
- next
- to
- above
- below
- during
- of
- toward
- across
- beneath
- except
- off
- under
- after
- beside
- for
- on
- unlike
- against
- besides
- from
- onto
- until
- among
- between
- in
- opposite
- unto
- around
- beyond
- inside
- out
- up
- as
- but
- into
- outside
- with
- at
- by
- like
- over
- within
- before
- despite
- near
- past
- 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).
Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Prepositional phrase</th>
<th>Object of the preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>in a house</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from</td>
<td>from the market</td>
<td>market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with</td>
<td>with an antelope</td>
<td>antelope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for</td>
<td>for the last time</td>
<td>time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>from time to time</th>
<th>at all times</th>
<th>in the end</th>
<th>out of season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>out of the blue</td>
<td>on the other hand</td>
<td>for a living</td>
<td>by the way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXERCISES

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in</th>
<th>the movies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>over</td>
<td>the water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under</td>
<td>the couch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>the ground</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.