

# Prepositions

Prepositions are words that show the relationship of a noun or a pronoun to some other word in the sentence, and they occur in larger structures called prepositional phrases (Lester, 2001). There are three important categories of prepositions: those of *place*, *time*, and *degree*. They are also sometimes used in idiomatic phrases (idioms are groups of words that have meanings not decipherable by defining each individual word, such as *raining cats and dogs*). In the table below you will find some of the most common uses of prepositions.

<b>Prep.</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Other</b>
At	<i>Meet at the intersection. Look at Adam's hair. Let's gather at the market.</i>	<i>The meeting is at noon. The gorillas gather at dusk.</i>	<i>Water boils at 100°C.</i>	<i>She works hard at making good grades. She's good at cooking.</i>
About	<i>(all around) The child ran about the field.</i>	<i>It is about 2:00 P. M. right now.</i>	<i>Heat the oven to about 350°.</i>	<i>It is a film about drug use.</i>
Above	<i>(higher than) Hang the painting above the sofa.</i>		<i>Is it above \$400? The temperature is above freezing. His grade is above average.</i>	<i>He thought he was above suspicion.</i>
Against	<i>He pressed his face against the glass.</i>	<i>We were working against the clock.</i>	<i>The teams were four against four.</i>	<i>He won the game, against all odds. He fought against his better judgment.</i>
Around	<i>The porch wraps around the house. The dog likes to run around the kitchen.</i>	<i>The meeting will begin at around 3 PM.</i>	<i>I think the cost is around \$14. Our hike was around 5 miles.</i>	
Before	<i>He bowed before the King. She stood before the mirror.</i>	<i>He was elected before 2004. She partied every day before the wedding.</i>		
Below	<i>The fish are below the surface of the water.</i>		<i>The temperature was below 32°. Her grade was far below average.</i>	
Between	<i>He was stuck between a rock and a hard place.</i>	<i>I'll meet you there between 3 and 4 o'clock.</i>	<i>Her height must have been between 5' and 5'5".</i>	<i>Just between you and me, I think this handout is crazy!</i>
By	<i>Place the iron on the table by the bed.</i>	<i>She had to return home by 10 PM.</i>	<i>Little by little, he dug himself out of the hole. I missed the bus by 1 minute.</i>	<i>He finished his homework by himself.</i>
In	<i>The coat is in the closet.</i>	<i>The Renaissance ended in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Be there in 15 minutes.</i>		<i>Pay me in Euros. Write the essay in French.</i>

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<b>Prep.</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Other</b>
On	<i>I used to hang out on that corner when I was young.</i>	<i>On December 12<sup>th</sup>, I will be 35 years old. I'm having a party on Sunday.</i>		<i>I want to be an announcer on the radio. I would like to attend a lecture on poetry.</i>
Over	<i>He carried an umbrella over his shoulder. She was holding a sign up over her head.</i>	<i>I'll be working on this research over the next month.</i>	<i>The meeting lasted over two hours. The pencil cost over \$3. The temperature is over 90°.</i>	<i>I heard the ad over radio.</i>
Through	<i>I enjoy walking through the field.</i>	<i>I've come to love him more and more through the years.</i>		<i>I've stayed with him, through thick and thin.</i>
To	<i>I'm going to the theater tonight.</i>	<i>The computers stay on from 8 to 5. I'll be there at a quarter to 6.</i>	<i>I will help you to the extent that I am able.</i>	<i>He dances to the beat of his own drummer.</i>
Toward(s)	<i>She began walking toward the tree.</i>	<i>She stayed awake toward morning.</i>	<i>The temperature headed toward 100°.</i>	<i>We must work together toward a lasting peace.</i>
Under	<i>The ball rolled under the fence. He crawled under the fence to get it.</i>	<i>In under 15 minutes, I will be finished with my work.</i>	<i>The pencil should have cost under \$1. There were under 6 women at the event. The temperature has been under 90° for months.</i>	<i>The judge felt that the jurors were under duress.</i>
With	<i>He went with his friends to the store.</i>	<i>She grew more impatient with the years.</i>	<i>He ranked with the best of men.</i>	<i>She was not pleased with his remark. The president did not speak with ease.</i>

The information for this handout was compiled from the following sources:

Celce-Murcia, M., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The grammar book: An ESL/EFL teacher's course* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle Cengage.

Lester, M. (2001). *Grammar and usage in the classroom* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Longman.

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