

Prepositions

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Grammar Notes

Prepositions have many uses in English. For example, they can express time (*in 2012, at 7:00, during the meeting*), place (*on the chair, at a restaurant, behind the sofa*), direction (*to the store, from Japan*), method (*by mail, with a fork*), material (*of wood, with cotton*), etc. Let's take a look at some common prepositions in English, and then we'll practice using them.

A. Common Prepositions

The following is a list of common prepositions, some notes on their use, and examples.

Preposition	Meaning(s)	Examples
about	on (the subject of), around (a place)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I read a book about the war.The speech was about causes of cancer.You can now move freely about the cabin.
above	on top of	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I placed the painting above the table.The blue sky was above us all afternoon.
across (from)	on the other side	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The theater is across from the bank.Columbus traveled across the ocean in 1492.
after	later in time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">After the game, the players went to dinner.After lunch, I studied in the library.The students were very tired after the exam.
against	opposed to, in contact with	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mr. Jones ran against Ms. Adams for treasurer.The umbrella is leaning against the wall.
along	on the side of	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We strolled along the bank of the river.There are many hotels along the Danube.
among	in the midst of	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There is a cat sitting among the flowers.He was found among the dead after the battle.
around	in a circle, turning a corner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The teacher walked around the room.Ken lives around the block.
at	clock time, place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The game starts at 9:00.Leslie works at Apple Computers.I'll meet you at the restaurant.

Grammar Notes cont.

A. Common Prepositions cont.

Preposition	Meaning(s)	Examples
before	earlier in time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before breakfast, I took a walk. • I would like to finish before noon. • The movie ended before 10:00.
behind	in back of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I hid the bag behind the couch. • Nestor was standing right behind me.
below	under	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bag is below the desk. • The temperature is 11 degrees below zero.
beneath	under, lower in status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dog was sleeping beneath the table. • Do you think that working for that company is beneath you?
beside	next to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I stood beside Mr. Johnson. • The chair is beside the table.
besides	in addition to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Besides John, Jane and Alicia are going.
between	in the middle of (two things or people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The blue car is between the red and the white ones. • I was sitting between Toshiko and Nabuko.
beyond	more than, farther than	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ines became rich beyond her wildest dreams. • Xavier looked beyond the blue horizon.
by	near, ownership, method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrick lives by the sea. • That book was written by Harlan Cobin. • I sent the letter by mail.
despite	contrast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the rain, we still had a picnic.
down	opposite of <i>up</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She ran down the hill. • The cat went down the stairs.
during	in progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a terrible storm during the night. • During the movie, Carl ate two bags of popcorn.
for	intended recipient, purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This gift is for Helga. • I'm taking this course for my degree.

Grammar Notes cont.

A. Common Prepositions cont.

Preposition	Meaning(s)	Examples
from	origin, start time or place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This package is from my brother. This shop is open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.
in	inside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The check is in my pocket.
into	putting inside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I put the change into my wallet.
like	similarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vicki looks just like her mother.
near	close to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul lives near his school.
of	possession, materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The wines of France are excellent. Diana's skirt is made of silk.
off	opposite of <i>on</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep your books off the table. Iris fell off her bicycle.
on	on top of, about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bag is on the table. I read a book on the election of 2008.
out	outside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kris went out the door at 6:00. Victor jumped out the window and ran away.
over	above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The airplane is flying over the house.
since	start time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wes has worked for Target since 1999.
through	from one side to the other, around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I walked through the park. We wandered through the city.
throughout	for the term of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throughout his life, he was always kind and gentle.
till	up to the time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I worked till 10:00 last night.
to	direction, intended recipient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashley is going to California next fall. Ron gave a ring to his girlfriend.
toward(s)	in the direction of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The truck was coming directly toward(s) us.

Grammar Notes cont.

A. Common Prepositions cont.

Preposition	Meaning(s)	Examples
under	below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cat hid under the couch. Place your bag under your seat.
until	up to the time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ziggy worked until midnight. Walter will stay in China until July.
up	opposite of <i>down</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kristin hiked up the mountain. The bathroom is up the stairs to your right.
upon	when (formal, poetic use)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once upon a time, there was a noble queen.
with	together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I had dinner with Arnold yesterday. Are you with me or against me?
within	inside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hal tried to live within his budget. Within these walls are many treasures.
without	lacking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People cannot live without water. I don't want to do this without you.

B. Prepositional Phrases

One of the most common constructions in the English language is the prepositional phrase. Sometimes there are even two or three prepositional phrases used in the same sentence. (E.g., *In 2015, she traveled to Chile.*)

A basic prepositional phrase has three words: *preposition, article, noun*. This is the most common construction. Other words, such as adjectives, may be added. The article is not used in some phrases, and the noun may be replaced by a pronoun. Analyze the following examples:

preposition + article + noun

- in the closet
- over the chair
- to the bank
- from an admirer

preposition + noun

- to India
- near New York
- after lunch

preposition + pronoun

- toward me
- with them

Exercise 1

FILL IN THE BLANKS I

Choose the correct preposition for each blank.

1. Henrietta met her boyfriend _____ the bus from Washington to Miami.
a) in
b) at
c) on
d) between
2. I have never seen such a gigantic nose _____ my whole life.
a) in
b) at
c) on
d) between
3. Chita Rodriguez comes _____ Cuba.
a) in
b) from
c) on
d) until
4. We will go dancing _____ midnight.
a) in
b) at
c) on
d) from
5. Anesha usually goes _____.
a) to the summer India
b) to India in the summer
c) to India on the summer
d) over the summer to India
6. Hank made many mistakes _____ the past.
a) in
b) at
c) on
d) from
7. _____ Joseph, Won Min and Adytya are also going.
a) Beside
b) Besides
c) Addition to
d) In addition
8. _____ money, life is very difficult.
a) With
b) Without
c) Within
d) In
9. The whole family goes out to breakfast _____ Sunday mornings.
a) in
b) at
c) on
d) from
10. I think that Michael's father was arrested _____ the fall.
a) in
b) at
c) on
d) from

Exercise 2

FILL IN THE BLANKS II

Choose the correct preposition for each blank.

1. Little Rosita is afraid ____ dogs.

- a) in
- b) at
- c) on
- d) of

2. Sergio's mother found him hiding ____ the bed.

- a) in
- b) at
- c) on
- d) under

3. Some little children do not like to go ____ school.

- a) to the
- b) to
- c) at the
- d) at

4. My two brothers really love to go ____ the mall.

- a) for
- b) to
- c) at
- d) from

5. Daniel's father looked him right
____ and knew he was lying.

- a) in the eye
- b) on the eye
- c) from the eye
- d) with the eye

6. The thief stole the handbag
____ the woman ____ Fifth Avenue.

- a) in / on
- b) from / in
- c) from / on
- d) with / on

7. Silvia traveled ____ the world. She
went ____ Asia, South America, and Africa.

- a) around / on
- b) around / to
- c) across / to
- d) in / on

8. The rug ____ the coffee table is ____ Iran.

- a) beneath / from
- b) below / to
- c) under / to
- d) underneath / to

9. Nick sat ____ his wife ____ the party.

- a) besides / at
- b) besides / from
- c) beside / from
- d) beside / at

10. Mahmoud read a book
____ the Russian revolution.

- a) from
- b) at
- c) on
- d) to

Exercise 3

SENTENCE STEMS I

Complete each sentence.

1. After the storm, _____.
2. Down by the river, _____.
3. Among the survivors, _____.
4. Near the town of Roxbury, _____.
5. Before breakfast, _____.
6. In my heart, _____.
7. Around the corner, _____.
8. Between you and me, _____.
9. For the past three years, _____.
10. Besides Charlie and Mohammed, _____.

Exercise 4

SENTENCE STEMS II

Complete each sentence.

1. _____ throughout my life.
2. _____ toward the exit.
3. _____ in my dreams.
4. _____ across the ocean.
5. _____ under the bed.
6. _____ in the winter.
7. _____ far from the one she loves.
8. _____ at 7:30 pm.
9. _____ on Thursday afternoon.
10. _____ with dolls.

Exercise 5

ERROR CORRECTION I

Correct the mistakes in the following sentences. Then rewrite each sentence correctly. Some sentences may have more than one error.

1. I didn't stay up late. I was asleep on midnight.

I didn't stay up late. I was asleep at midnight.

2. She met her best friend on September at Seoul.

3. Anita moved of Rome at 2006.

4. The plane finally arrived on 5:46 pm.

5. Bob met his future wife in a bus, not on a taxi.

6. In this moment, Ushbek is studying from Bunker Hill Community College.

7. Don't pay attention at that fortune-teller. She has no idea about events on the future.

8. My mother and father don't drive on the dark, so they stay home at the night.

9. I think that Tom is in a date with Sally. I think she is separated to her husband.

10. That woman is staring to the man on the other table. He is looking off the window.

Exercise 6

ERROR CORRECTION II

Correct the mistakes in the following sentences. Then rewrite each sentence correctly. Some sentences may have more than one error.

1. On Sunday, Jong goes at church for to pray.

2. At the summer, my family goes to beach to swim.

3. On her living room, there is an end table next the couch.

4. Barbara found her purse under chair on the family room.

5. Bobby read a book across the Second World War.

6. The bakery is next the diner.

7. The children walked for the park to get home quickly.

8. My mother cannot live with her iPod. She always listens music.

9. I saw the plane moving the airport, but I did not see it land.

10. Before breakfast, Sidney jogged on the park.

Exercise 7

FILL IN THE BLANKS III

Choose the correct preposition for each blank.

1. Can you tell me a little bit ____ your experience?
 - a) in
 - b) about
 - c) on
 - d) from
2. I think I left my laptop ____ the couch.
 - a) in
 - b) at
 - c) on
 - d) down
3. Some little children are afraid ____ animals.
 - a) to the
 - b) to
 - c) of
 - d) of the
4. We had a picnic ____ the tall elm tree.
 - a) beneath
 - b) on
 - c) on top of
 - d) next
5. The crowd cheered continuously ____ the game.
 - a) beside
 - b) near
 - c) during
 - d) by
6. I am not completely ____ you.
I just don't share all your opinions.
 - a) for
 - b) against
 - c) near
 - d) beside
7. John's father was standing
right ____ him at the concert.
 - a) in front
 - b) next
 - c) behind
 - d) on
8. Don't forget to turn the television
off before you go ____ bed.
 - a) at
 - b) to
 - c) to the
 - d) at the
9. ____ the rain, the game was not canceled.
 - a) Despite
 - b) In spite
 - c) Despite from
 - d) Because of
10. ____ the class, the students
walked slowly ____ the room.
 - a) Before / out to
 - b) After / out of
 - c) During / in of
 - d) After from / out

Exercise 8

FILL IN THE BLANKS IV

Choose the correct preposition for each blank.

1. Can you tell me how to get _____ library?
 - a) to
 - b) to the
 - c) toward the
 - d) from the
2. I think you left your book _____ the table over there.
 - a) in
 - b) at
 - c) on
 - d) down
3. _____ the walls of the ancient city, there are many secrets.
 - a) Without
 - b) Within
 - c) Above
 - d) Through
4. John had a discussion _____ his advisor yesterday.
 - a) from
 - b) on
 - c) with
 - d) to
5. I took a walk _____ the river. It was so peaceful.
 - a) after
 - b) along
 - c) during
 - d) through
6. Quentin has lived in Texas _____ July.
 - a) for
 - b) since
 - c) from
 - d) at
7. John's father said that he would work _____ 9:00 pm.
 - a) until
 - b) without
 - c) over
 - d) for
8. I found your old love letter _____ some papers that I had left in my desk drawer.
 - a) around
 - b) against
 - c) after
 - d) among
9. My best friend lives right _____ the street _____ me.
 - a) across / to
 - b) across / from
 - c) across / for
 - d) across / on
10. The temperature was eleven degrees _____ zero yesterday.
 - a) below
 - b) from
 - c) to
 - d) over

Exercise 9

COMPLETE THE STORY

Write an appropriate preposition in each blank.

Note that you will also need to write "to" for all infinitive verbs.

Hidden in Plain Sight

They say that when you want 1. hide something, one 2. the best places

3. hide it is 4. plain sight. 5. a story written 6. Edgar Allan Poe called *The Purloined*

Letter, a cunning man, known as Mr. X, stole a secret letter 7. an important woman. He threatened to

show the letter to everyone if she did not pay him a great deal 8. money. She went 9. the police,

and they secretly searched Mr. X's apartment. They started by looking 10. the rugs and 11. the books

12. the bookshelves. Nothing. Then they looked 13. the bed and 14. all the closets, but they

could not find it. They thought that Mr. X was carrying the letter 15. his pocket or 16. his wallet, so

they followed him 17. a park, but they were unsuccessful in finding the letter.

The police called the famous detective Auguste Dupin and asked him 18. investigate the case. Dupin,

wearing dark sunglasses, went 19. Mr. X's house. While he was sitting 20. the table drinking a cup

21. tea, he looked 22. the whole room. He looked at the paintings 23. the wall, the books 24.

the desk, and even the cat sleeping 25. the rug. Finally, he looked 26. a bowl 27. some letters in

it. He noticed that one 28. the letters looked familiar. Dupin knew that this one was the stolen letter. When

Mr. X heard a man shout 29. the front window, he ran 30. see what was happening. In the meantime,

Dupin took the stolen letter and replaced it 31. a similar one that he had 32. his pocket. He thanked

Mr. X 33. the coffee and hurried out. This is how the detective found the stolen letter. It was hidden in

plain sight, right 34. the table.

Exercise 10

QUIZ

Choose the correct preposition for each blank.

1. The Rodriguez family goes _____ church every Sunday.
 - a) to
 - b) to the
 - c) toward the
 - d) from the
2. I will always stand _____ you, _____ thick and thin.
 - a) by / in
 - b) by / through
 - c) on / in
 - d) on / through
3. _____ the blue skies _____ me, I felt like a new man.
 - a) With / below
 - b) With / above
 - c) Without / over
 - d) With / toward
4. Joshua lives _____ a bakery and a bagel shop.
 - a) from
 - b) on
 - c) with
 - d) between
5. Calculus III is way _____ me. I don't understand anything in that class.
 - a) after
 - b) along
 - c) beyond
 - d) through
6. Omar always stays _____ his room to relax before a big exam.
 - a) on
 - b) for
 - c) in
 - d) under
7. I will love you _____ I die. I promise.
 - a) till
 - b) during
 - c) when
 - d) without
8. Once _____ a time, an old man was living _____ a bridge.
 - a) upon / under
 - b) upon / next
 - c) upon / through
 - d) on / below
9. When I saw the ball coming _____ me, I didn't know what to do.
 - a) across
 - b) about
 - c) toward
 - d) from
10. I have always tried to be honest and sincere _____ my life.
 - a) until
 - b) across
 - c) to
 - d) throughout

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students review and practice different types of prepositions such as time, place, direction, and method. They will see all the prepositions listed with examples, and then they will complete various practice exercises.

LEVEL: Low Int – Int

TIME: 2–3 hours

TAGS: prepositions, prepositional phrases, prepositions of time, prepositions of place, prepositions of direction, method, material, ownership

Exercise 1

1. c	3. b	5. b	7. b	9. c
2. a	4. b	6. a	8. b	10. a

Exercise 2

1. d	3. b	5. a	7. b	9. d
2. d	4. b	6. c	8. a	10. c

Exercise 3

Answers will vary. Examples include:

1. After the storm, **the sun came out**.
2. Down by the river, **six fishermen were having their lunch**.
3. Among the survivors, **there were two children and one woman**.
4. Near the town of Roxbury, **there is a large mall**.
5. Before breakfast, **I took a walk around the block**.
6. In my heart, **I know that I am right**.
7. Around the corner, **there is a large house**.
8. Between you and me, **I don't trust Larry**.
9. For the past three years, **my sister has lived in Washington**.
10. Besides Charlie and Mohammed, **Aisha and Hee Jung are also coming to the party**.

Exercise 4

Answers will vary. Examples include:

1. **I have loved music** throughout my life.
2. **The satisfied concertgoers headed** toward the exit.

3. **I am the best soccer player in the league** in my dreams.
4. **Hal's brother lives** across the ocean.
5. **The dog was hiding** under the bed.
6. **We go skiing** in the winter.
7. **Thelma lives** far from the one she loves.
8. **The movie will start** at 7:30 pm.
9. **Teresa has Spanish class** on Thursday afternoon.
10. **My little sister loves to play** with dolls.

Exercise 5

1. I didn't stay up late. I was asleep **at** midnight.
2. She met her best friend **in** September **in** Seoul.
3. Anita moved **to** Rome **in** 2006.
4. The plane finally arrived **at** 5:46 pm.
5. Bob met his future wife **on** a bus, not **in** a taxi.
6. **At** this moment, Ushbek is studying **at** Bunker Hill Community College.
7. Don't pay attention **to** that fortune-teller. She has no idea about events **in** the future.
8. My mother and father don't drive **in** the dark, so they stay home **at** night.
9. I think that Tom is **on** a date with Sally. I think she is separated **from** her husband.
10. That woman is staring **at** the man **at** the other table. He is looking **out** the window.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 6

- On Sunday, Jong goes **to** church **to** pray.
- In (the)** summer, my family goes **to the** beach to swim.
- In** her living room, there is an end table **next to** the couch.
- Barbara found her purse under **the** chair **in** the family room.
- Bobby read a book **about/on** the Second World War.
- The bakery is **next to** the diner.
- The children walked **through** the park to get home quickly.
- My mother cannot live **without** her iPod. She always listens **to** music.
- I saw the plane moving **toward** the airport, but I did not see it land.
- Before breakfast, Sidney jogged **in/around/through** the park.

Exercise 7

1. b	3. c	5. c	7. c	9. a
2. c	4. a	6. b	8. b	10. b

Exercise 8

1. b	3. b	5. b	7. a	9. b
2. c	4. c	6. b	8. d	10. a

Exercise 9

Answers may vary.

1. to	13. under	25. on
2. of	14. in	26. in
3. to	15. in	27. with
4. in	16. in	28. of
5. In	17. to	29. outside
6. by	18. to	30. to
7. from	19. to	31. with
8. of	20. at	32. in
9. to	21. of	33. for
10. under	22. around	34. on
11. behind	23. on	
12. on	24. on	

Exercise 10

1. a	3. b	5. c	7. a	9. c
2. b	4. d	6. c	8. a	10. d

SPELLING NOTES:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Theater*, *Traveled*, *Canceled*, and *Practice*. Other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Theatre*, *Travelled*, *Cancelled*, and *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Also note that *Toward* is preferred in American and Canadian English, while *Towards* is preferred in British English. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

EDITOR'S NOTES:

- We have new beginner-level lessons on Prepositions of Time and Prepositions of Place in our Grammar Practice Worksheets section.
- Some words in English such as *up*, *down*, *on*, *off*, etc. can function as prepositions or adverbs depending on sentence position and function. Check out our blog post on this topic, refresh your memory on the rules, and decide if it's worth mentioning to your students.