

## PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions (on, in, at, by) usually appear as part of a **prepositional phrase**. Their main function is to allow the noun or pronoun in the phrase to modify another word in the sentence. Prepositional phrases always begin with a preposition and end with a noun, pronoun, or other word group that functions as the object of the preposition (in *time*, on the *table*).

A preposition can be one word (*about, despite, on*) or a word group (*according to, as well as, in spite of*). Place prepositional phrases as close as possible to the words they modify. Adjectival prepositional phrases usually appear right after the noun or pronoun they modify and answer questions like *Which one?* and *What kind of?* Adverbial phrases can appear anywhere in a sentence and answer questions like *When?* *How?* and *Why?*

**AS ADJECTIVE**      Many species *of birds* nest there.  
**AS ADVERB**         The younger children stared *out the window*.  
(A Writer's Resource, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian edition)

The purpose of prepositions is to express positioning for the nouns and pronouns in your sentence.<sup>1</sup> The use of prepositions can be complex, making it difficult to pick the right one for a sentence. Here are the most common prepositions:<sup>2</sup> (and the Writer's Resource)

about	before	excepting	near	throughout
above	behind	excluding	next to	till
according to	below	following	of	to
across	beneath	for	off	toward
after	beside	from	on	under
against	between	in	on account of	underneath
along	beyond	in addition to	onto	unlike
along with	by	in case of	on top of	until
among	by means of	in front of	out	up
apart from	by way of	in place of	out of	upon
around	concerning	in regard to	outside	up to
as	despite	in spite of	over	via
as to	down	including	past	with
as well as	due to	inside	regarding	with reference to
aside from	during	inside of	round	within
at	except	into	since	with respect to
because of	except for	like	through	without

<sup>1</sup> Buckley, J. (2003). Checkmate: A writing reference for Canadians. Nelson: Scarborough, Ontario.

<sup>2</sup> Aaron, J.E. & McArthur, M. (2006). The little brown compact handbook (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Pearson Longman: Toronto.



## TIMES WITH **in**

- seasons: **in** spring, **in** summer
- months: **in** April, **in** November, **in** the third month
- years: **in** 2056, **in** 1956
- durations: **in** ten minutes, **in** four days, **in** a month

## PREPOSITIONS DESCRIBING RELATIONSHIPS IN SPACE

### **at, by, in, on**

show an object's settled position or position after it has moved

I arrived **at** the Baghdad airport.  
An old power plant sat unused **by** the school.  
**In** this town most people work at the call centre.  
They carry their children **on** their backs.

### **to, onto, into**

show the direction of movement toward a point, surface, or area

They brought their babies **to** the clinic.  
She placed the crown **onto** his head.  
Walking **into** his office is like walking **into** a zoo.

### **by, along, through**

show the direction of movement next to or past a point, surface, car or area hours.

We drove **by** the ocean.  
From their castles **along** the Rhein River, German princes could regulate river traffic.  
Omero Catan, a salesperson from New York, drove the first **through** the Lincoln Tunnel after waiting in line for 30

### **from, out of**

show the direction of movement away from a point, surface, or area

The joropo is a waltzy musical form **from** Venezuela.  
After the airplane crashed, she had to walk **out of** the

## USING PREPOSITIONS - QUIZ

- 1) John is a successful man. He works \_\_\_\_ Wall Street.
- 2) University convocations take place \_\_\_\_ May and \_\_\_\_ October.
- 3) I missed the ending of the movie because my DVD player broke \_\_\_\_\_ the last scene.
- 4) I drink a lot of coffee because there is a Tim Horton's \_\_\_\_\_ from my house.
- 5) I like all types of vegetables \_\_\_\_\_ for celery.
- 6) Classes were cancelled yesterday \_\_\_\_\_ the weather.
- 7) Have you ever been to Wolfville? It is \_\_\_\_\_ the Annapolis Valley.
- 8) It is very hard to take a math exam \_\_\_\_\_ a calculator.
- 9) Nigel will be up all night. He has to keep writing \_\_\_\_\_ his essay is finished.
- 10) We are meeting \_\_\_\_\_ 3:00 \_\_\_\_\_ Robie Street.
- 11) She has trouble sleeping because the man in the apartment \_\_\_\_\_ her plays the drums.
- 12) We wanted to be outside so we went for a walk in the park \_\_\_\_\_ the cold.
- 13) Jennifer was late when she reached the meeting. It was further \_\_\_\_\_ of town than she expected.
- 14) We decided to spend Saturday night at home with a movie \_\_\_\_\_ of going out.
- 15) You cannot see him in the picture because somebody is standing \_\_\_\_\_ him.

Answers: 1) *on*; 2) *in* and *in*; 3) *during*; 4) *across*; 5) *except*; 6) *because of/ due to*; 7) *in*; 8) *without*; 9) *until*; 10) *at* and *on*; 11) *above*; 12) *in spite of*; 13) *out*; 14) *instead of*; 15) *in front of*