

THE ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER

PREPOSITIONS AND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

A preposition shows a relationship between a noun and the rest of the sentence. Most prepositions indicate position in time or space.

aboard	before	except	out	under
about	behind	for	outside	underneath
above	below	from	over	unlike
across	beneath	in	past	until
after	beside	inside	regarding	unto
against	besides	into	round	up
along	between	like	since	upon
amid	beyond	near	through	with
among	by	of	throughout	within
around	concerning	off	till	without
as	down	on	to	
at	during	onto	toward	

Prepositions are usually single words, but can be multi-word.

across from	by means of	in between	on top of
along with	by virtue of	in front of	out of
as for/of/to	by way of	in place of	up on
as well as	except for	in regard to	up to
because of	in addition to	in spite of	up with
but for	in back of	next to	with regard to

A prepositional phrase is a preposition plus its object (a noun or pronoun) and any modifiers. An object answers the question "what or whom" after a preposition. There can be more than one object for a preposition.

to the store
during baseball practice
for Jack and Jane

Don't mistake the object of a preposition for the subject of a sentence. In the sentence below, "flock" not "gulls" is the subject of the sentence.

A flock of gulls landed on the beach.

Don't mistake the word "to" and a verb for a prepositional phrase. It is an infinitive. In the sentence below, "to run" is not a prepositional phrase because "run" is not a noun or pronoun.

She likes to run in the park on Sundays.

Prepositional phrases that come at the beginning of the sentence are followed by a comma.

After the game, we are going to a movie.

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PREPOSITION USAGE

There are many customary ways prepositions are used in English. For example, some words are paired with specific prepositions.

according to	consistent with	familiar with	nervous about
afraid of	consisting of	happy about	sad about
allergic to	depressed about	hostile to	sorry for
angry with	disturbed by	interested in	worried about

When verbs are paired with prepositions, they are called two-word verbs or phrasals. Many of these are idiomatic expressions that are used in casual speech, not in formal writing.

ask out	clean up	fill in	hand in	make up	sign in
break down	clear up	fill out	hand out	pick out	take off
break up	cut down	fill up	hang up	pick up	take out
bring out	cut off	get up	help out	point out	take over
bring up	cut out	give in	keep on	put on	try on
burn down	cut up	give up	keep up	put out	turn off
burn up	drop in	go out	leave out	run into	turn up
call off	drop off	go over	look into	run out	wake up
call up	drop out	grow up	look out	set up	wear out

Prepositions also can be paired to describe distance or time.

They drove from Chicago to Tulsa from 6:00 AM to noon.

Sheila has to work from 6:00 AM until 3:00 PM.

Specific prepositions are used to describe time.

On Monday, you must be here at 8:00 AM.

Our ship sails at dawn on January 24.

During the summer, we mow the grass in the morning.

Melissa will begin classes in the fall.

I was born in 1958 in the Twentieth Century.

Americans prospered during the Industrial Revolution.

Specific prepositions are used with addresses.

They used to live in France.

Did he live in California?

They live on Mulberry Street.

The hospital is at 446 Dixie Trail in Lake City.

Some prepositions also serve as subordinating conjunctions (the keywords that begin dependent clauses). Instead of an object, the word is followed by a subject and verb.

After the game, they went to a movie. (preposition)

After they left the game, they went home. (sub. conjunction)

We had to wait until dinner. (preposition)

We had to wait until Frank cooked dinner. (sub. conjunction)