

The Preposition

Recognize a *preposition* when you see one.

Prepositions are the words that indicate location. Usually, prepositions show this location in the physical world. Check out the three examples below:



The puppy is **on** the floor.



The puppy is **in** the trash can.



The puppy is **beside** the phone.

On, **in**, and **beside** are all prepositions. They are showing *where* the puppy is. Prepositions can also show location in *time*. Read the next three examples:

At midnight, Jill craved mashed potatoes with grape jelly.

In the spring, I always vow to plant tomatoes but end up buying them at the supermarket.

During the marathon, Iggy's legs complained with sharp pains shooting up his thighs.

At midnight, **in the spring**, and **during the marathon** all show location in time. Because there are so many possible locations, there are quite a few prepositions. Below is the complete list.

| | | |
|--------------|----------------|------------|
| about | concerning | onto |
| above | despite | on top of |
| according to | down | out |
| across | during | out of |
| after | except | outside |
| against | except for | over |
| along | excepting | past |
| along with | for | regarding |
| among | from | round |
| apart from | in | since |
| around | in addition to | through |
| as | in back of | throughout |
| as for | in case of | till |
| at | in front of | to |
| because of | in place of | toward |
| before | inside | under |
| behind | in spite of | underneath |

| | | |
|-------------|------------|---------|
| below | instead of | unlike |
| beneath | into | until |
| beside | like | up |
| between | near | upon |
| beyond | next | up to |
| but* | of | with |
| by | off | within |
| by means of | on | without |

* **But** is very seldom a preposition. When it is used as a preposition, **but** means the same as **except**—*Everyone ate frog legs but Jamie*. **But** usually functions as a coordinating conjunction.

Understand how to form a prepositional phrase.

Prepositions generally introduce prepositional phrases. Prepositional phrases look like this:

PREPOSITION + **OPTIONAL MODIFIERS** + **NOUN, PRONOUN, OR GERUND**

Here are some examples:

At school

At = preposition; **school** = noun.

According to us

According to = preposition; **us** = pronoun.

By chewing

By = preposition; **chewing** = gerund.

Under the stove

Under = preposition; **the** = modifier; **stove** = noun.

In the crumb-filled, rumpled sheets

In = preposition; **the, crumb-filled, rumpled** = modifiers; **sheets** = noun.

Realize that some prepositions also function as subordinate conjunctions.

Some prepositions also function as subordinate conjunctions. These prepositions are **after, as, before, since, and until**. A subordinate conjunction will have both a subject and a verb following it, forming a subordinate clause.

Look at these examples:

After Sam and Esmerelda kissed goodnight

After = subordinate conjunction; **Sam, Esmerelda** = subjects; **kissed** = verb.

As Jerome buckled on the parachute

As = subordinate conjunction; **Jerome** = subject; **buckled** = verb.

Before I eat these frog legs

Before = subordinate conjunction; **I** = subject; **eat** = verb.

Since we have enjoyed the squid eyeball stew

Since = subordinate conjunction; **we** = subject; **have enjoyed** = verb.

Until your hiccups stop

Until = subordinate conjunction; **hiccups** = subject; **stop** = verb.

If you find a noun [with or without modifiers] following one of these five prepositions, then all you have is a prepositional phrase. Look at these examples:

After the killer calculus test

After = preposition; **the, killer, calculus** = modifiers; **test** = noun.

As a good parent

As = preposition; **a, good** = modifiers; **parent** = noun.

Before dinner

Before = preposition; **dinner** = noun.

Since the breakup

Since = preposition; **the** = modifier; **breakup** = noun.

Until midnight

Until = preposition; **midnight** = noun.

