

THE PREPOSITION

Recognize a preposition when you find one.

Prepositions almost always indicate location. Often, this location is in the physical world.

Here are three examples:



The puppy is **on** the floor.



The puppy is **beside** the shoe.



The puppy is **with** a friend.

On, **beside**, and **with** are all prepositions. With the other words that make up the **prepositional phrase**, they are showing *where* the puppy is.

In addition, prepositions can 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 instead.

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

At, **in**, and **during** all help to show *where* we are in time.

Because there are so many possible locations in space and time, the list of prepositions is long:

PREPOSITIONS

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*. Usually, **but** functions as a **coordinating conjunction**.

Understand how to form a prepositional phrase.

Prepositions frequently introduce **prepositional phrases**, which will usually follow this pattern:

Preposition + **Optional Modifier(s)** + **Noun, Pronoun, or Gerund**

Here are 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 have split personalities.

Five prepositions can also function as **subordinate conjunctions**: *after*, *as*, *before*, *since*, and *until*. When these five are subordinate conjunctions, both a **subject** and a **verb** will follow, forming a **subordinate clause**.

Read 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.

When only a **noun**, object **pronoun**, or **gerund** follows (with or without **modifiers** and/or **objects**), you have just a prepositional phrase.

Consider these examples:

After the killer calculus test

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

As a leader

As = preposition; **a** = modifier; **leader** = noun.

Before dancing

Before = preposition; **dancing** = gerund.

Since the breakup

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

Until her

Until = preposition; **her** = pronoun.

