**Prepositions "On," "At," and "In"**

A preposition is a word that links a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to some other part of the sentence.  
  
Prepositions can be tricky for English learners. There is no definite rule or formula for choosing a preposition. In the beginning stage of learning the language, you should try to identify a preposition when reading or listening in English and recognize its usage.

* to the office
* at the desk
* on the table
* in an hour
* about myself

A preposition is used to show direction, location, or time, or to introduce an object.   
  
Here are a few common prepositions and examples.

**On**

Used to express a surface of something:

* I put an egg on the kitchen table.
* The paper is on my desk.

Used to specify days and dates:

* The garbage truck comes on Wednesdays.
* I was born on the 14th day of June in 1988.

Used to indicate a device or machine, such as a phone or computer:

* He is on the phone right now.
* She has been on the computer since this morning.
* My favorite movie will be on TV tonight.

Used to indicate a part of the body:

* The stick hit me on my shoulder.
* He kissed me on my cheek.
* I wear a ring on my finger.

Used to indicate the state of something:

* Everything in this store is on sale.
* The building is on fire.

**At**

Used to point out specific time:

* I will meet you at 12 p.m.
* The bus will stop here at 5:45 p.m.

Used to indicate a place:

* There is a party at the club house.
* There were hundreds of people at the park.
* We saw a baseball game at the stadium.

Used to indicate an email address:

* Please email me at abc@defg.com.

Used to indicate an activity:

* He laughed at my acting.
* I am good at drawing a portrait.

**In**

Used for unspecific times during a day, month, season, year:

* She always reads newspapers in the morning.
* In the summer, we have a rainy season for three weeks.
* The new semester will start in March.

Used to indicate a location or place:

* She looked me directly in the eyes.
* I am currently staying in a hotel.
* My hometown is Los Angeles, which is in California.

Used to indicate a shape, color, or size:

* This painting is mostly in blue.
* The students stood in a circle.
* This jacket comes in four different sizes.

Used to express while doing something:

* In preparing for the final report, we revised the tone three times.
* A catch phrase needs to be impressive in marketing a product.

Used to indicate a belief, opinion, interest, or feeling:

* I believe in the next life.
* We are not interested in gambling.

**Prepositions of Movement: *to*   
and *No Preposition***

* We use *to* in order to express movement toward a place.  
  #They were driving to work together.  
  #She's going to the dentist's office this morning.
* *Toward* and *towards* are also helpful prepositions to express movement. These are simply variant spellings of the same word; use whichever sounds better to you.  
  #We're moving toward the light.  
  #This is a big step towards the project's completion.
* With the words *home, downtown, uptown, inside, outside, downstairs, upstairs*, we use no preposition.  
  #Grandma went upstairs  
  #Grandpa went home.  
  #They both went outside.

**Prepositions of Time: *for* and *since***

* We use *for* when we measure time (seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years).  
  #He held his breath for seven minutes.  
  #She's lived there for seven years.  
  #The British and Irish have been quarreling for seven centuries.
* We use *since* with a specific date or time.  
  #He's worked here since 1970.  
  #She's been sitting in the waiting room since two-thirty.

**Prepositions with Nouns, Adjectives, and Verbs.**

Prepositions are sometimes so firmly wedded to other words that they have practically become one word. (In fact, in other languages, such as German, they would have become one word.) This occurs in three categories: nouns, adjectives, and verbs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **NOUNS and PREPOSITIONS** | | |
| approval of awareness of belief in concern for confusion about desire for | fondness for grasp of hatred of hope for interest in love of | need for participation in reason for respect for success in understanding of |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ADJECTIVES and PREPOSITIONS** | | |
| afraid of angry at aware of capable of careless about familiar with | fond of happy about interested in jealous of made of married to | proud of similar to sorry for sure of tired of worried about |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **VERBS and PREPOSITIONS** | | |
| apologize for ask about ask for belong to bring up care for find out | give up grow up look for look forward to look up make up pay for | prepare for study for talk about think about trust in work for worry about |

**Idiomatic Expressions with Prepositions**

* agree *to* a proposal, *with* a person, *on* a price, *in* principle
* argue *about* a matter, *with* a person, *for* or *against* a proposition
* compare *to* to show likenesses, *with* to show differences (sometimes similarities)
* correspond *to* a thing, *with* a person
* differ *from* an unlike thing, *with* a person
* live *at* an address, *in* a house or city, *on* a street, *with* other people

PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions are short words (on, in, to) that usually stand in front of nouns (sometimes also in front of gerund verbs).

Even advanced learners of English find prepositions difficult, as a 1:1 translation is usually not possible. One preposition in your native language might have several translations depending on the situation.

There are hardly any rules as to when to use which preposition. The only way to learn prepositions is looking them up in a [dictionary](http://www.ego4u.com/en/lingopad), reading a lot in English ([literature](http://www.ego4u.com/en/read-on/literature)) and learning useful phrases off by heart ([study tips](http://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/learning/gap-filling)).

The following table contains rules for some of the most frequently used prepositions in English:

**Prepositions – Time**

| **English** | **Usage** | **Example** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * on | * days of the week | * on Monday |
| * in | * months / seasons * time of day * year * after a certain period of time *(when?)* | * in August / in winter * in the morning * in 2006 * in an hour |
| * at | * for *night* * for *weekend* * a certain point of time *(when?)* | * at night * at the weekend * at half past nine |
| * since | * from a certain point of time (past till now) | * since 1980 |
| * for | * over a certain period of time (past till now) | * for 2 years |
| * ago | * a certain time in the past | * 2 years ago |
| * before | * earlier than a certain point of time | * before 2004 |
| * to | * telling the time | * ten to six (5:50) |
| * past | * telling the time | * ten past six (6:10) |
| * to / till / until | * marking the beginning and end of a period of time | * from Monday to/till Friday |
| * till / until | * in the sense of *how long something is going to last* | * He is on holiday until Friday. |
| * by | * in the sense of *at the latest* * up to a certain time | * I will be back by 6 o’clock. * By 11 o'clock, I had read five pages. |

**Prepositions – Place (Position and Direction)**

| **English** | **Usage** | **Example** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * in | * room, building, street, town, country * book, paper etc. * car, taxi * picture, world | * in the kitchen, in London * in the book * in the car, in a taxi * in the picture, in the world |
| * at | * meaning *next to, by an object* * for *table* * for events * place where you are to do something typical (watch a film, study, work) | * at the door, at the station * at the table * at a concert, at the party * at the cinema, at school, at work |
| * on | * attached * for a place with a river * being on a surface * for a certain side (left, right) * for a floor in a house * for public transport * for *television, radio* | * the picture on the wall * London lies on the Thames. * on the table * on the left * on the first floor * on the bus, on a plane * on TV, on the radio |
| * by, next to, beside | * left or right of somebody or something | * Jane is standing by / next to / beside the car. |
| * under | * on the ground, lower than (or covered by) something else | * the bag is under the table |
| * below | * lower than something else but above ground | * the fish are below the surface |
| * over | * covered by something else * meaning *more than* * getting to the other side (also *across*) * overcoming an obstacle | * put a jacket over your shirt * over 16 years of age * walk over the bridge * climb over the wall |
| * above | * higher than something else, but not directly over it | * a path above the lake |
| * across | * getting to the other side (also *over*) * getting to the other side | * walk across the bridge * swim across the lake |
| * through | * something with limits on top, bottom and the sides | * drive through the tunnel |
| * to | * movement to person or building * movement to a place or country * for *bed* | * go to the cinema * go to London / Ireland * go to bed |
| * into | * enter a room / a building | * go into the kitchen / the house |
| * towards | * movement in the direction of something (but not directly to it) | * go 5 steps towards the house |
| * onto | * movement to the top of something | * jump onto the table |
| * from | * in the sense of *where from* | * a flower from the garden |

**Other important Prepositions**

| **English** | **Usage** | **Example** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * from | * who gave it | * a present from Jane |
| * of | * who/what does it belong to * what does it show | * a page of the book * the picture of a palace |
| * by | * who made it | * a book by Mark Twain |
| * on | * walking or riding on horseback * entering a public transport vehicle | * on foot, on horseback * get on the bus |
| * in | * entering a car  / Taxi | * get in the car |
| * off | * leaving a public transport vehicle | * get off the train |
| * out of | * leaving a car  / Taxi | * get out of the taxi |
| * by | * rise or fall of something * travelling (other than walking or horseriding) | * prices have risen by 10 percent * by car, by bus |
| * at | * for *age* | * she learned Russian at 45 |
| * about | * for topics, meaning *what about* | * we were talking about you |

Complete the exercise according to the picture.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_the picture, I can see a woman.
2. The woman is sitting \_\_\_\_\_\_a table.
3. She is sitting \_\_\_\_\_\_ a chair.
4. There is another chair \_\_\_\_\_\_\_the woman.
5. Her feet are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the table
6. The woman is holding a cup \_\_\_\_\_\_her hands.
7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_the table are a laptop, a paper, a calculator, an appointment calendar, two pens and a muffin.
8. The woman is looking \_\_\_\_\_\_\_her laptop.
9. The woman's bag is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_the table.



ACTIVITY

I.  
Identify all prepositions in the following sentences.  
  
After flying for many hours, we finally got off the airplane. We walked out the exit and went to the baggage claim area. There were hundreds of different bags on the conveyer belt. I almost picked up the wrong one because it looked like mine.  
  
II.  
  
Choose a correct preposition in the sentence.  
  
1) I want to lose 5 kilogram                      (on, at, in) one month.   
2) Could you get me this pants                      (on, at, in) a larger size?   
3) She seems to be interested                      (on, at, in) Psychology.   
4) I will come to pick you up                      (on, at, in) 2 pm tomorrow.   
5) This class will be held                      (on, at, in) Mondays.