

LESSON 13

Prepositions

Prepositions - I

1. Single words as 'in, on, at, from, with, etc.'
2. Prepositions in combination with certain verbs or words, etc. (for example, get along, give in, bring about.)

How Prepositions are used

Study the following dialogue:



Salesman: Please madam, come **in** and have a look. There **on** the top floor we have the section for readymade garments. **Up** there **on** the second floor you can see the electronic goods. **Behind** the other counter there is a restaurant. Within few days we shall have more counters.

Customer: How **about** a theatre?

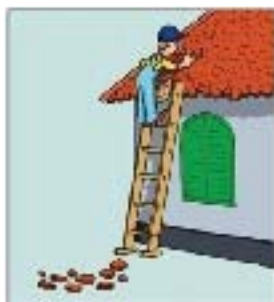
Salesman: Yes, we are going to have one very shortly.

Customer: When do you close your shop?

Salesman: Sharp **at** 10 p.m.

(All words in bold are prepositions)

Prepositions are words or groups of words, such as in, from, to etc. governing and normally preceding a noun or a pronoun. Generally speaking, they express a relation between two entities; the types of relations shown are those of place, position, time or method.



up



down

How prepositions are used







IN

For expressing time, place and position

Time

		
in the morning	in May	in a few minutes




Place/Position

		
in a corner	in a line/row	in front of
		
in the house	in a bag	in a bottle

AT

For expressing time, place and position

Time

		
come at five	at night	sea at sunrise

Place

		
meet at his residence	meet me at the railway station	look at the wall

Position

	
at the end of the lane	at the door




ON

For expressing time, place and position

Time

		
see you on Sunday	be on time	on which date

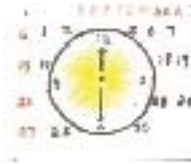
Place

		
on the table	on the wall	on his way to Delhi

Position



Note: In relation to Time we use:



At – for the time of the day

On – for days and dates

In – for longer periods

(at 6.00 pm)

(on Sunday, on 5th of May)

(in five days, in the morning etc.)

Hence we say, "We'll see you on the 6th of May in the morning at five."

Remember: At/in/on are not used before the words like next, last, and every (day, night etc.)

Example:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| (i) We will see you on next Friday. | (incorrect) |
| (ii) We'll see you next Friday. | (correct) |
| (iii) The family came here in last Monday. | (incorrect) |
| (iv) The family came here last Monday. | (correct) |
| (v) What do you do on every week end? | (incorrect) |
| (vi) What do you do every week end? | (correct) |

Exercise 1

Fill in the blanks with the correct preposition (in, at, on)

- (i) Many offices are closed Saturdays.
- (ii) You can see the rainbow the sky.
- (iii) Neil Armstrong stepped moon 1969.
- (iv) Wait for me. I shall be back a moment.

- (v) We shall start for Kanya Kumari 6 p.m.
- (vi) She was born 1983.
- (vii) what time would you like to go?
- (viii) Can you come to see me Tuesday?

Exercise 2

- (i) The books arethe shelf.
- (ii) The numbers are written the books.
- (iii) You can see the manthe shop.
- (iv) He's looking the fruits.
- (v) The car is waiting the door.
- (vi) The boy is the car.
- (vii) She lives Kolkata.
- (viii) Her friend lives Pune, which is Maharashtra.
- (ix) My bed is the corner.
- (x) Her house isthe end of the lane.

Some comparative phrases

At the end /in the end

- (a) At the end(when the action or activity is over) or to indicate the last position.
 - (i) They stood up at the end of the play.
 - (ii) Meet me at the end of the match.
 - (iii) She came at the end of the month.
 - (iv) The Indian fans were excited at the end of the match.
 - (v) She will leave at the end of the year.
 - (vi) You can see that house at the end of the road.

(vii) There is a gate at the end of these houses.

(b) In the end (finally)

(i) Who won the match in the end?

(ii) In the end health is more important than wealth.

(iii) Sushil was given the prize in the end.

On time/in time

On time: This means punctually, not late

(i) The train was on time and everyone was relieved.

(ii) The music programme started on time.

In time: Soon enough to do something or for something.

(i) Don't worry, you are in time for the examination..

(ii) The helicopter came just in time to rescue the woman.

In/into

In: to be inside

at a point within an area

Into: to go into, enter

to a position in or inside something



(i) He's in the room.

(ii) A foolish frog got stuck in the well.

(iii) She's sitting in a car.

(i) He went into the room.

(ii) The other foolish frog jumped into the well.

(iii) She is getting into the car.

Exercise 3

Complete the following sentences using one of the following prepositions: in, on, at, into.

(i) I saw her going her bike but her brother went a car.

(ii) Quick, sit the blue car, we are late.

(iii) You were just time for the ceremony.

- (iv) The teacher always manages to be time.
- (v) You are invited tea Sunday 7 p.m.
- (vi) The car ran a tractor and was damaged.
- (vii) I live the house at the corner.
- (viii) Who won the game the end?
- (ix) the end the heroine marries the villain.
- (x) which page should I see it?
- (xi) She has gone the hope to get an entry.
- (xii) You are looking worried – what's your mind?
- (xiii) Father you are eighty. Don't drive such a speed this age!
- (xiv) The whole factory was fire.

Across/ After/ Along

- Across: From one side to the other side of something
 After: Later than something; following something in time.
 Along: Beside, or through part or the whole of the length of something.

Phrasal Uses

Along

- (i) We are not able to get *along* with our manager. (keep good terms with someone)
- (ii) Why don't you come *along* with us. (with something / somebody)
- (iii) She has been sacked *along* with five others. (in addition to something)
- (iv) They are walking *along* the river.
- (v) The new colony has been built *along* the sea shore.

Note: Up and down denote contrast in terms of vertical direction while along denotes contrast from one end to the other in terms of horizontal axis.

Across

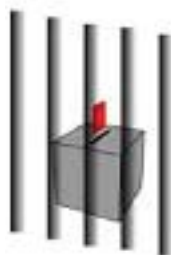
- (i) Many people have tried to swim *across* the English Channel.
- (ii) This room measures 50 feet *across*.
- (iii) The bridge is *across* the river.

After

- (i) They reached shortly *after* the train had arrived. (later than something)
- (ii) Come *after* an hour, I'm busy right now. (later than)
- (iii) You can come one *after* another. (next to and following something)
- (iv) She was left staring *after* him. (behind something when they have left)
- (v) The police is *after* the thief. (trying to find out or catch)
- (vi) I have told you time *after* time not to lend your books. (used to show that something happens many times or continuously)
- (vii) *After* all, he is a good player. (in spite of what has been said or expected)

Before, behind, within, without, by

These prepositions are used to express place, time, or position, but their meaning in a sentence will depend upon the words they are combined with.



Behind the bars

Before

- Raghu reached for the meeting *before* I did. (showing time)
- Darshana always rings the bell *before* entering the house. (showing time)
- The lawyer placed the papers *before* the magistrate (indicating position/place)
- The building just *before* the T.V. tower is the post office. (indicating position/place)

Behind

- They stood *behind* us in the queue. (at the back of)
- The trains are running *behind* time because of the fog. (later than or not earlier than)
- Their car is far *behind* ours. (far back)
- We have finished painting our house but they haven't: they are far *behind*. (late in doing the work)

Within

The police arrived *within* minutes. (In a short time)

Finish your work *within* five minutes. (before a particular time)

He lives *within* walking distance of the theatre. (not farther than a particular place)

We are now *within* the boundary of the wildlife sanctuary. (not outside)

Without

The lost soldiers had to go *without* food for three days. (not having anything)

The team played *without* much interest and therefore lost the match. (in want of)

It's raining heavily and if you go *without* an umbrella you are sure to get wet. (in the absence of)

By

It is used in many ways to express:

(a) how we do something – go by train, send by post, pay by cheque, reported by him, by hand, written by.

(b) to indicate a time not later than the one mentioned– by this date, by evening, by tomorrow,

(c) who is the doer of the action– by whom, by someone, by Rohit

Examples

- | | | | |
|-------|------------------------------------|------|---------------------------|
| (i) | How will you go? | Ans. | By car, of course. |
| (ii) | How will you send the parcel? | Ans. | By post or by hand. |
| (iii) | What's the time? | Ans. | Five o'clock, by my watch |
| (iv) | Who wrote the letter? | Ans. | It was written by Seeta. |
| (v) | By what time should I reach there? | Ans. | By five, if possible. |

Answers to Exercise 1

(i) on (ii) in (iii) on, in (iv) in (v) at (vi) in (vii) at (viii) on

Answers to Exercise 2

(i) in (ii) on (iii) in (iv) at (v) at (vi) in (vii) in (viii) in, in (ix) in (x) at

Answers to Exercise 3

(i) on; in (ii) in (iii) in (iv) on (v) to, on, at (vi) into (vii) in (viii) in (ix) in (x) on (xi) in (xii) on (xiii) at, at (xiv) on

Prepositions- II

Focus on - under, over, through, of, off, with, to, about, up, down

Under, over, through: some common usages



Under: In or to a position under or to a position lower than, below

- (i) Look for your shoes *under* the bed. (below something)
- (ii) I am *under* stress these days. (affected by something)
- (iii) The bed of the sea is *under* several thousand feet of water. (that is, below the surface of something)
- (iv) Ravi is working *under* the new manager. (to show who controls things)
- (v) No one *under* 18 can vote. (less than)
- (vi) The matter is *under* consideration. (experiencing or going through a process)
- (vii) *Under* the circumstances nothing can be done. (in accordance with)

Over: Above, across, to other side, end

- (i) Spread this sheet *over* the chair. (resting on the surface of somebody or something and partly or completely covering it.)
- (ii) The aeroplane was flying just *over* us. (above)
- (iii) The branches of the trees formed a tunnel *over* the road. (in or to a position higher than but not touching somebody or something.)
- (iv) Throw the ball *over* to him there. (on the far or opposite side of something)
- (v) The match is *over*. (ended)
- (vi) Leaves have fallen all *over* the garden. (in and all parts of something).
- (vii) There is a bridge *over* there. (from one side of something to other)
- (viii) The Director has control *over* all the departments. (having control or showing authority)
- (ix) We will discuss it *over* dinner. (during something)

Through: From end to end or side to side of; between or among; by agency or means or fault of

- (i) The bullet went *through* the target. (from one end or side of something)
- (ii) They are walking *through* the field.
- (iii) The bus went *through* the traffic light at high speed.
- (iv) I could not sit *through* the whole function because I had a headache. (from the beginning to the end of an activity, a situation or a period of time.)
- (v) I have to get *through* these exams. (pass)
- (vi) Aman booked his ticket *through* a travel agent. (by an agency of)
- (vii) We got news of Rita's result *through* her brother Gaurav. (by means of)

Practice and learn

Study the following picture and describe using prepositions to guide your friend to the post office from your house. (the building with the red roof)



Come _____ of your house. Walk _____ the lawn until you reach the road. Take a turn _____ the left. You will see a building _____ top of the hill. That is the Post Office.

Of: Belonging to something; relating to somebody

- (i) The residents *of* the building are proud to be neighbours of Sachin Tendulkar. (belonging to)
- (ii) The President *of* the United States lives in the White House. (belonging to)

When you talk of a single work of a writer or an artist, you use the preposition 'by' but, when you talk of everything of that artist or writer you use the preposition 'of' as in the following sentences (iii, iv)

- (iii) The works *of* Kalidas are easily available.
- (iv) Any painting *by* a great artist is costly.
- (v) Changez Khan *of* Mongolia was a feared warrior.
- (vi) Please give me five kilos *of* mangoes.
- (viii) A girl *of* eighteen can get a driving license quite easily.
- (ix) Chennai is located south *of* the river Cauvery.
- (x) During partition a large number of people were made homeless.

With

Used to express manner, cause, possession, company

- (i) He fought *with* courage.
- (ii) They always work *with* dedication.
- (iii) The children like to go shopping *with* their mother.
- (iv) The room is crowded *with* books or crowded *with* all kinds of men and women.
- (v) It's unhealthy to be angry *with* your colleagues all the time.
- (vi) He is delighted *with* his son's engagement and so he is distributing sweets to everyone.
- (vii) The whole area is infested *with* ants.
- (viii) You can see the girl *with* the long hair and red bag.
- (ix) Reema's umbrella is *with* her all the time.

To

Used to express the idea of going to a place or an event.

- (i) I want to go *to* China.
- (ii) I am on my way *to* the Republic Day parade..

Used to express the idea of passing from one person to another.

- (i) The infection is easily passed from one person *to* another.
- (ii) Please give the packet *to* the postman.
- (iii) The wicket-keeper threw the ball *to* the bowler.

Some more combinations:

Example

- (i) After the play was over she wrote a letter *to* all her friends thanking them.
- (ii) Send the letter *to* me or talk *to* your parents, and we will try to solve your problem.
- (iii) *To* whom does this box belong? Return it *to* its owner.
- (iv) The student was sent *to* the teacher after the class.

Off

Used

(1) in phrasal verbs. (2) independently in different sentences.

(1) In Phrasal Verbs

See off

My uncle is going to America so we are going to *see him off* at the airport. (to go to station, airport etc. to say good bye)

Cut off

The village was *cut off* from the town by flood water. (get disconnected, separated)

Take off

The plane *took off* on time. (to leave the ground and begin to fly.)

Better off

Ever since Sudhir got the job his family seems to be *better off*. (in a better monetary condition)

Put off

We have *put off* our plans to see the movie because it is raining. (to cancel a meeting or arrangement)

On and off

It rained *on and off* all day. (now and again)

(2) Other Uses

(i) Down or away from a place or at a distance in time or place

Rohit fell *off* the ladder

Keep *off* the fire.

Scientists are still a long way *off* finding the cure for cancer.

(ii) Leading away from

The children play *off* the playground meant for the seniors.

(iii) To say something has been removed

The lid has been taken *off*.

- (iv) Away from work or duty
He is *off* from duty for ten days.
- (v) Not wanting or liking something
I'm *off* fruits these days.
He's finally *off* drinks after his long illness.

About

Read the following passage and note the different meanings that the word "about" can take:

The children shouted together, "Madam! Tell us (i) *about* the puppy you saw outside the school gates!"

"Alright", said Mrs. Gupta, "I will tell you (ii) *about* it".

"Well, the puppy seemed to have been thinking (iii) *about* exploring the world and so, at (iv) *about* six o'clock in the evening, when his mother wandered away to search for food, the puppy saw his chance and quickly ran down the street. He walked (v) *about* enjoying this freedom, but forgot (vi) *about* the night setting in. It was only when it grew darker he realized his mistake.

The different meanings of the word 'about' in the passage are:

- (i) Used to seek some information.
- (ii) Talking on the subject of something.
- (iii) Telling the purpose of something.
- (iv) Approximately
- (v) Going in many directions in a place.
- (vi) Talking on the subject of something.

Up: towards or in higher position

- (i) When Shweta awoke from her sleep the sun was already *up*. (had risen)
- (ii) Mona walked *up* to the ticket counter and asked for a ticket to Bhopal. (to go up to a place where something is)
- (iii) Time is *up*. Please stop writing now. (over)
- (iv) Ravi and Shashi they stayed *up* till late at night waiting for their friends to come back. (keep awake)

Down: Downwards along or through or into, at a lower part

- (i) "Don't get excited. *Calm down!*" (to show that the strength is less)
- (ii) *Note down* carefully what I am saying. (to bring on a paper)

- (iii) Battery-operated cars *cut down* on pollution. (make less)
- (iv) Seeing the rioting students pelting stones, the shopkeepers brought the *shutters down*. (to bring to lower position)
- (v) Manish *went down* South to meet his family. (to or in the south of a country)
- (vi) You *go down* the road and you will reach the church. (go along)

Prepositions - III

Focus on: Phrasal use of Prepositions in combination with verbs/words

Sometimes certain verbs/words are combined with certain prepositions bringing out different meanings, for example, “done with” and “done up”. Being “done with” something means that you have ended your association with something/someone. “I’m done with my studies”. When something is decorated it is said to be “done up”. “Rashtrapati Bhavan has been done up with lights for Republic Day.”

Cut

down – These trees have been *cut down* illegally.

off – We had to *cut off* our conversation when the manager came. (bring to abrupt end)

up – She is quite *cut up* because Reena has broken her friendship with her. (to feel emotionally upset)

out – He is *cut out* to be a leader. (have the qualities needed for something.)

Keep

up – If you *keep up* this pace, you’ll succeed. (continue without stopping)

up with – Please slow down. I can’t *keep up with* you. (to move or make progress at the same rate.)

in – A cage with strong iron bars was used to *keep in* the wild animals. (restrain)

out – The principal advised the students to *keep out* of matters that did not concern them. (not to take part in)

Down

with – Rohit had to miss the exams because he was *down with* swine flu (to suffer from an illness.)

to – By the end of the month I am *down to* my last few rupees. (to have only a little money left).

Turn

up – The missing boy has *turned up* at last. (be found)

down – He *turned down* the proposal to buy a new car. (refuse to consider)
off – They *turned off* the water while digging the drain. (start or stop the flow of water or electricity.)
out – Shushant *turned out* to be a thief. (as shown by later events, eventually)

Take

off – Samir's mother told him to *take off* his wet shirt. (remove clothes from your body)
with – Maria was *taken with* the new arrangement of furniture in the house. (be attracted to or to find interesting)
out – Housewives in Bangalore will *take out* a procession to protest against the increase in prices.
down – The city authorities decided to *take down* all buildings that were an obstruction to the smooth flow of traffic. (to remove a structure especially separating it into pieces)

Get

over – I cannot *get over* the fact that India's hockey team did not qualify for the Olympics. (recover from)
in – What time does your train *get in*? I will be waiting at the platform to pick you up. (to arrive a place)
Meeta has applied for admission to Delhi University – do you think she will *get in*? (get admitted)
along – Sonu and Monu do not *get along* well. (be friendly or have understanding)
off – We have to *get off* this bus immediately – I am not feeling well. (to leave a place)
through – Only a few students were able to *get through* the entrance test (to be successful)
away – The Barua family planned a holiday in Nainital to *get away* from the heat of Delhi. (to leave a place)

Run

into – I never expected to *run into* my old teacher at the restaurant. (meet by chance)
at – The mad man *ran at* my mother with a knife. (to run towards as if to attack)
out – We have *run out* of milk. (getting over, finishing)
away – The professor told his students not to *run away* from hard work. (avoid)
over – The two boys were *run over* by the bus and have been taken to hospital. (of vehicles – to knock a person or an animal down and drive over its parts)

Drop

out – Many students *dropped out* of the exams because they were not prepared. (cease to appear)
off – Many of the young children *dropped off* to sleep in the middle of the documentary. (to go into light sleep)

in – Why don't you *drop in* for coffee some time? (to pay a visit)

Bring

up – My uncle had to *bring up* his nephews because they were orphaned at an early age. (to take care of)

in – The newly-elected government *brought in* new laws to prevent smuggling. (introduced)

round – The wise grandfather *brought round* the fighting cousins to a sensible decision. (to make to agree.)

Come

from – Mona *comes from* a respected family of Lucknow. (belong to)

to – Vinod has *come to* his senses at last and given up smoking. (recover)

about – It so *came about* that the young princess did not become the queen. (happened)

down – Petrol prices have *come down* considerably. (make less)

Look

for – She is *looking for* a new job. (search)

after – My mother is *looking after* the business now that my father is unwell. (taking care)

up – We *look up* to our elders for guidance. (admire or respect)

through – You needn't study in detail – just *look through* the notes.

down – Don't *look down* upon people who cannot speak English. (consider oneself as superior)

Put

away – They have large sums of money *put away* in fixed deposits. (to keep safely)

out – Please *put out* the candle. (extinguish)

off – It is getting late. Let us *put off* the meeting until tomorrow. (postpone)

down – The father put his foot *down* and refused to let his son go abroad. (to suppress, snub)

by – The couple had *put by* some money for their daughter's education. (lay aside for future)

up – Lata's bad temper is very difficult to *put up* with. (to tolerate)

in – She *puts in* 12 hours a day to this work. (to spend time in or to make effort)

Round

up – The police have managed to *round up* all the car thieves in the town. (find and capture)

about – I would say her weight was *round about* 60 kg. (approximately)

Note: Since it is not possible in the present book to list all the uses of prepositions learners may refer to Hornby: Oxford Advanced learner's Dictionary and current English, ELBS and OUP, 1974 for the phrasal uses of other prepositions.

Prepositions as interrogatives

Read the following sentence and note the questions:

Questions with prepositions at the beginning of the sentence.

Questions

- (i) On which day do you think he will arrive?
- (ii) At what time does his train come?
- (iii) By which train will he travel?

Answers

- He can come on Sunday.
- 5 pm, I suppose.
- He can come by Qutub Express.

Questions with prepositions at the end

- (i) What are you looking at?
- (ii) Who are you waiting for?
- (iii) Which pen are you going to write with?

- I am looking at this photograph.
- I am waiting for my cousin.
- The red one.

Exercise 1

Make meaningful sentences using each unit in the first column, as many times as possible, with a different preposition.

(i) The function will start	for	year
(ii) Can I see you	at	the evening
(iii) I am going to ask my friend to come	on	no time
(iv) We will go to the club	by	Monday
(v) The minister will be here	in	Tuesday
(vi) Satya has been working in his college	during	2 o'clock
(vii) Yashu has been down with malaria	before	my stay here
(viii) Sony started studying	after	5 p.m.
(ix) I finished my work	since	1984
(x) I will help you as much as I can.		

Answers to Exercise 1

- (i) The function will start at 2 o'clock.
- (ii) Can I see you on Monday?

- (iii) I am going to ask my friend to come after 5 p.m.
- (iv) We will go to the class in the evening.
- (v) The minister will be here in no time.
- (vi) Satya has been working in this college since 1984.
- (vii) Yashu has been down with malaria since Tuesday.
- (viii) Sony started studying in 1984.
- (ix) I finished my work before 2 o'clock.
- (x) I shall help you as much as I can during my stay.

(Learners can make more combinations on their own.)