

Prepositions

A preposition is a word that shows a relationship between two words or ideas in a sentence. It is placed before a noun or a pronoun to form a phrase (called a *prepositional phrase*) that modifies another word in the sentence. The prepositional phrase almost always acts as an adjective or an adverb.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

To and *with* are the prepositions in the above sentence. *To hell* is a prepositional phrase modifying the noun *road*. In other words, *to hell* is acting as an adjective. *With good intentions* is a prepositional phrase acting as an adverb, modifying the verb *is paved*.

Here is a partial list of prepositions:

about	by	of	through
above	during	off	throughout
across	except	on	till
after	for	out	to
around	from	over	under
as	in	past	unlike
at	into	plus	until
before	like	regarding	upon
behind	near	since	with
between	next	than	without

Common problems with prepositions concerning time and place

The most frequently used prepositions in English are *at*, *by*, *for*, *from*, *in*, *of*, *on*, *to*, and *with*. All of these prepositions can be used many different ways depending upon the context. This makes them confusing. Since all of the above prepositions can be used to describe either time or place, mistakes occur when one use is confused for the other.

There are no clear rules for prepositions. Each use must be learned in context. Here is a short chart describing the uses of the most commonly misused prepositions:

Time

at	<i>at</i> a specific time: <i>Class will end at 8:55.</i>
on	<i>on</i> a specific day or date: <i>We will meet on Monday.</i>
in	<i>in</i> a time of day or period of time: <i>Class meets in the evening.</i>
by	<i>by</i> a specific time or date: <i>I need to be in class by 3:45.</i>

Place

at	<i>at</i> a location: <i>We met at the classroom.</i> <i>at</i> a corner or edge of something: <i>She sat at the desk.</i> <i>at</i> a target: <i>The teacher threw the chalk at the sleeping student.</i>
on	<i>on</i> a surface: <i>He placed the book on the table.</i> <i>on</i> an electronic medium: <i>The song on that CD was weird.</i>
in	<i>in</i> an enclosed space: <i>We took the final in our regular classroom.</i> <i>in</i> a geographical location: <i>I grew up in Vietnam.</i> <i>in</i> a print medium: <i>I read it in a book.</i>
by	<i>by</i> a landmark: <i>I had left my bag by the soda machine.</i>

Preposition Exercise

name:

In the following sentences, replace prepositions that are not used correctly. If a sentence is correct, write "correct" after it.

Example:

The play begins on 7:20 p.m. ✖ The play begins ~~on~~ at 7:20 p.m.

- a. Whenever we eat at the Centerville Diner, we sit at a small table on the corner of the room.
 - b. At the beginning of the dotcom wave, students created new businesses in record numbers.
 - c. In Thursday, Nancy will attend her first Pilates class at the community center.
 - d. Alex began looking for her lost mitten in another location.
 - e. We decided to go to a restaurant because there was no fresh food on the refrigerator.
1. I don't feel safe walking on my neighborhood in night.
 2. If the train is on time, it will arrive on six o'clock at the morning.
 3. In the corner of the room there is a large bookcase with a pair of small Russian dolls standing at the top shelf.
 4. She licked the stamp, stuck it in the envelope, put the envelope on her pocket, and walked to the nearest mailbox.
 5. The mailbox was in the intersection of Laidlaw Avenue and Williams Street.