



MODIFIERS: PREPOSITIONS

A preposition is a word that gives information about the relationship between the object of the preposition and the word or phrase the preposition is modifying. A preposition occurs in a prepositional phrase that consists of a preposition + noun phrase.

10a Forms

There are three forms of prepositions: simple, compound, and phrasal.

Some simple prepositions → at, in, on, near, to

→ We ran **to** the arena when we heard the music.

Some compound prepositions → nearby, outside, through-out, underneath

→ Our seats were **underneath** the biggest speakers I have ever seen.

Some phrasal prepositions → by means of, in front of, on account of, subsequent to, due to the

→ **On account of** the loud music, I ended up with a headache for three days.



10b

Types

Prepositions are always part of prepositional phrases that include the preposition and the object of the preposition. The object of a preposition can be a pronoun, noun, noun phrase, noun clause or another word class functioning like a noun.

→ to them

Prep Pronoun

→ to the arena

Prep NP

→ underneath the biggest speakers I have ever seen.

Prep

NP

→ on account of the loud music

Prep

NP

→ subsequent to leaving the arena

Prep

Gerund

→ on what I saw that day

Prep

Noun Clause

Prepositional phrases are recursive, meaning that they can appear within other prepositional phrases.

→ I got lost in the middle of the arena.

EXERCISE 1

Directions: Underline each prepositional phrase, and circle each preposition. If a prepositional phrase is within another prepositional phrase, underline it twice.

1. When you think of prepositions, think of three boxes and all the spatial relationships that can occur between those three boxes.
2. You can be among the boxes or between two boxes.

3. In the middle of two boxes, you can find another box.
4. You can be above one box while being below another one.
5. At 3:00 p.m. every day, you could take a piece of candy out of one of the boxes.

DID YOU KNOW?

In English, prepositions occur before nouns (as the *pre-* implies) and show a relationship between two things (e.g., *The dog in the car*). However, not all languages have prepositions. Some languages, like Japanese, Turkish, and Hindi, have postpositions, which follow the noun instead.



10c

Functions

Prepositional phrases function in many important ways in sentences. They can be adverbials, post-modifiers of nouns, adverbial complements, indirect objects, objects of adjectives, or objects of adverbs.

Prepositional phrases that function as adverbials—giving information about how, when, why—can usually move to various positions in the sentence.

- ➔ **In the spring**, I will go see the band again.
- ➔ I will go see the band again **in the spring**.
- ➔ I will, **in the spring**, go see the band again.

List of prepositions

aboard	down from	opposite of
about	due to	out
above	during	out of
according to	except	outside
across	except for	outside of
across from	excepting	over
after	for	over to
against	from	owing to
along	from among	past
alongside	from between	prior to
alongside of	from under	regarding
amid	in	round
among	in addition to	round about
apart from	in back of	save
around	in behalf of	save for
as	in front of	since
aside from	in place of	subsequent to
as well as	in regard to	together with
at	in regards to	through
away from	inside	throughout
because of	inside of	till
before	in spite of	to
behind	instead of	toward
below	into	under
beneath	like	underneath
beside	near	until
besides	near to	unto
between	next to	up
beyond	of	up to
by	off	upon
by means of	on	with
by way of	on account of	within
concerning	on behalf of	without
considering	onto	with regard to
despite	on top of	
down	opposite	

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