

Prepositions

Prepositions function within phrases to modify main verbs, nouns, or adjectives.

They also express spatial and temporal relationships between parts of a sentence.



For Example...

1. Location: ***at, on, in***: Prepositions differ according to the number of dimensions they refer to. We can group them into three classes using concepts from geometry: point, surface, and area/volume.
 - a. Point: (at) Prepositions in this group indicate that the noun that follows them is treated as a point in relation to which another object is positioned.
 - b. Surface: (on) Prepositions in this group indicate that the position of an object is defined with respect to a surface on which it rests.
 - c. Area/Volume: (in) Prepositions in this group indicate that an object lies within the boundaries of an area or within the confines of a volume.






For Example...

2. Direction: ***to, on(to), in(to)***: These prepositions express movement toward something. *To, into, and onto* correspond respectively to the prepositions of location *at, in, and on*. Each pair can be defined by the same spatial relations of point, line/surface, or area/volume.
3. Temporal relations: Prepositions also express how objects relate temporally. Prepositions can express a point in time or an extended time.
 - a. ***On, at, and in*** are each used to express similar relations as their spatial counterparts.
 - b. ***Since, by, for, and from-to*** are used to express extended time.





Examples

1. We arrived at the house in the afternoon.
 2. The waiter was at our table immediately.
 3. We have not seen our waiter since we arrived.
 4. The soccer player leaped to the ball.
 5. The tiger jumped onto my face.
 6. The tiger jumped into the trap.
 7. I went to the store today.
 8. A light appeared in the window.
 9. The cattle will graze on the open range for the whole summer.
 10. Three hockey players are on the ice.
 11. The cowboy rode into the setting sun.
 12. Three boxers are in the ring.
 13. The play from _____
September _____ November.
 14. The water spilled onto _____ the floor.
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Prepositions: To and For

- *For* is a personal and personally limiting preposition and expresses a proprietary relationship. Also, *for* refers to temporal duration (ex: I went to England *for* two weeks) and motivation.
- *To* is a quantitative, directional preposition and should be used to explain the impersonal connection between objects.





For Example

1. For:

- a. “Speak *for* myself.” Here *for* refers to motive and is personally limiting and proprietary. The emphasis is as follows: “I speak on my own behalf; no one else does it for me.”
- b. “This is my first time *for* a visit.” This sentence lays more stress on the personal *motive* for the visit. This preposition stresses the relationship between the visitor and the visitee.

2. To: “Speak *to* myself.” Here *to* explains the direction of the conversation.

3. Infinitives: “This is my first time *to visit*.” *To visit* is an infinitive not a preposition. This sentence lays stress on the *action* of the visit. An adverb could be added to inform the reader of the specific type of action (personal visit, professional visit . . . etc.).





Examples

1. (Direction) I went to the bank to deposit my check.
 2. (Personal) I am waiting for the ambulance.
 3. (Motive) John left for France where he hopes to study French culture.
 4. (Direction) Thomas is leaving to go to England tomorrow.
 5. (Motive) The bookstore closed for convocation.
 6. (Direction) The clerk left to go to the chapel.
 7. (Motive) The clerk left for the chapel.
 8. (Direction) Sally wants to go to the lake.
 9. (Personal) John spoke for himself.
 10. (Direction) John spoke to himself.
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