



50 Common Prepositions



What is a Preposition?

Prepositions are an important part of any language. They often show how things relate in time and in place or position.

- Let's meet **at** 7:30.
- Let's meet **at** the park **by** the green bench.

Prepositions can also indicate a method, or how something is done.

- Can I pay **by** credit card?

[preposition OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com](http://preposition.OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com)

Preposition Word Origin

late Middle English: from Latin *praepositio*(n-), from the verb *praepondere*, from *prae* 'before' + *ponere* 'to place'.

What are the Most Common Prepositions? (How I made this list)

There are several resources online that collect information to see how often a word is used in the English language. A popular resource is <https://www.english-corpora.org/>. This is a listing of many online English corpora. (Corpora is the plural form of the noun **corpus**. A corpus is a collection of written or spoken texts.)

I compared some common preposition word lists from different English websites and chose the words that I found on every list.

Next, I sorted the word list into alphabetical order, then I added preposition definitions along with real example sentences so you can see how these words are used in natural English conversation.

You'll find links for the lists I compared at the bottom of this post.

Prepositions List With Examples

I only chose single-word prepositions for this list. Prepositional phrases like **in front of** are not included.

Many of the prepositions have multiple meanings and can be used to relate things in time, place, position, and method. When you click on the word you'll be taken to its definition page at Oxford Learner's Dictionaries.com. There you can find the different meanings and uses, plus correct pronunciation audio.

I've generally chosen the most common meaning and written an example for that meaning.

[about](#) - on the subject of somebody/something; in connection with somebody/something

- The school board had a meeting to talk **about** building a new soccer field at the high school.

above - at or to a higher place or position than something/somebody

- At the top of the mountain, I was standing **above** the clouds. It was really cool.

across - from one side to the other side of something

- When the light turned green we walked **across** the street.

after - later than something; following something in time

- Terry and I went for a coffee **after** the movie.

against - opposing or disagreeing with somebody/something

- The government wants to build a car factory near the park. The townspeople are **against** it.

along - from one end to or towards the other end of something

- We walked **along** the road until it came to the ocean.

among - surrounded by somebody/something; in the middle of somebody/something

- You can speak freely here, you're **among** friends.

around - surrounding somebody/something; on each side of something

- She threw her arms **around** me and gave me a big kiss.

at - used to say where something/somebody is or where something happens/used to say when something happens

- Let's meet **at** the park **at** 7:30.

A more detailed study of the prepositions IN, AT, and ON here:

[How to Use the prepositions IN AT ON \(Graphics, Story, Videos\)](#)

before - earlier than somebody/something

- You shouldn't stretch **before** you run. You need to warm up your muscles first.

behind - at or towards the back of somebody/something, and often hidden by it or them

- The people sitting **behind** me at the theater were talking during the whole movie.

below - at or to a lower level, position or place

- The people who live in the apartments **below** me a quite noisy.

beneath - in or to a lower position than somebody/something; under somebody/something

- Rescue workers used drones to find people trapped **beneath** the collapsed building after the earthquake.

beside - next to or at the side of somebody/something

- At school, I always try to sit **beside** a smart kid. That way they can help me if I don't understand the teacher.

between - in or into the space separating two or more points, objects, people, etc.

- A better strategy is to sit **between** two smart kids.

beyond - more than something

- Yohan always does above and **beyond** what you ask him to do something. He's a great worker.

but - except; apart from

- Everyone **but** Joe came to the party.

by - used for showing how or in what way something is done

- All the lights in the park are solar, they are powered **by** the sun.

A more detailed study of the preposition BY here:

[5 Ways the preposition BY can make you a better speaker \(PDF\)](#)

despite - used to show that something happened or is true although something else might have happened to prevent it

- The project failed, **despite** his best efforts to make it work.

down - from a high or higher point on something to a lower one

- The police found him laying by the car with blood running **down** his face.

during - all through a period of time

- The people sitting behind me at the theater were talking **during** the whole movie.

except - used before you mention the only thing or person about which a statement is not true

- Everyone came to the party **except** Joe.

for - in order to help somebody/something

- Your suitcases look heavy, let me carry them **for** you.

A more detailed study of the preposition FOR here:

[The English preposition FOR \(Your #1 guide + Video\)](#)

from - used to show where somebody/something starts

- The bus **from** the airport should be arriving soon.

in - within the shape of something; surrounded by something/after a particular length of time

- Will is working **in** the garage, he should be done **in** about 20 minutes.

inside - on or to the inner part of something/somebody; within something/somebody

- I found a pen **inside** one of the desk drawers.

into - to a position in or inside something

- It is very hot today. When I get home I'm going to run straight **into** the backyard and jump in the pool.

A more detailed study of the prepositions TO, INTO, and IN TO here:

[Prepositions TO, INTO or IN TO? \(Intermediate English\)](#)

like - similar to somebody/something

- Caroline looks **like** her mother.

near - at a short distance away from somebody/something

- When I retire I want to live **near** the ocean.

of - belonging to somebody; relating to somebody

- Patrick is a good friend **of** mine. I have known him since junior high school.

A more detailed study of the preposition OF here:

[How to use Adjectives with the preposition OF \(English grammar guide\)](#)

off - down or away from a place or at a distance in space or time

- Lily fell **off** the balcony and broke her leg.

on - in or into a position covering, touching or forming part of a surface

- And University I put a motivational poster **on** the wall in front of my desk.

Where people come to learn real English - www.WorldEnglishBlog.com - [Helpful Resources](#)

Understand the difference between IN TIME and ON TIME here:

[ON time or IN time? \(Learn FAST with Video\)](#)

[onto](#) - used with verbs to express movement on or to a particular place or position

- As soon as I stepped **onto** the boat it started rocking side to side. I felt ill.

[out](#) - away from the inside of a place or thing

- Every morning I wake up, get **out** of bed, and drink a big glass of water.

[outside](#) - not part of something

- I'd like to help you but I'm afraid this is **outside** my area of expertise.

[over](#) - resting on the surface of somebody/something and partly or completely covering them/it

- It's polite to put your hand **over** your mouth when you cough in public.

[past](#) - later than something/on or to the other side of somebody/something

- The movie starts at a quarter **past** two. (2:15)
- My office is on Center Street, one block **past** the post office.

[since](#) - from a time in the past until a later past time, or until now

- You're late, I've been waiting here **since** 1:30.

[through](#) - from one end or side of something/somebody to the other

- I left my keys at the office so I had to get in **through** the unlocked basement window.

[throughout](#) - in or into every part of something

- My school holds special events **throughout** the year.

[to](#) - in the direction of something; towards something

- During the summer I always ride my bike **to** work.

More great Preposition TO blog posts here:

[Verbs with the prepositions TO and AT \(Video + PDF\)](#)

[The difference between To and For \(30+ examples Learn fast\)](#)

[towards](#) - with the aim of obtaining something, or helping somebody to obtain something

- The money that my team raises will go **towards** new uniforms.

[under](#) - in, to or through a position that is below something

- When I was in elementary school I used to be scared of monsters living **under** my bed.

[underneath](#) - under or below something else, especially when it is hidden or covered by the thing on top

- I dropped my pen and it rolled **underneath** the desk.

[until](#) - up to the point in time or the event mentioned

- I have to stay at work **until** this assignment is finished.

[up](#) - to or in a higher position somewhere

- My apartment is on the 5th floor so I use the stairs more than the elevator. Walking **up** stairs is great exercise.

[upon](#) - the same as **on**

- You have to fill out any forms **upon** arrival to the country.

[with](#) - in the company or presence of somebody/something

- Murphy lives **with** two of his friends from University.

Understand the difference between STAY WITH and STAY AT here:

[English preposition practice – WITH or AT](#)

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within - before a particular period of time has passed; during a particular period of time

- Whenever I order something from Amazon it always arrives **within** 1 or 2 days.

without - not having, experiencing or showing something

- I almost didn't recognize Raymond last night. He looks different **without** his glasses.

Preposition FAQ

Across Versus Through

Some of my students ask me to explain the difference between **across** and **through**.

Across - a preposition that means "from one side of something to the other side." This is often used with *verbs of movement*.

- *Walk* **across** the street.
- *Swim* **across** the lake.
- *Drive* **across** the city.

Another meaning is on the other side (of something). This is commonly used when you describe the location of something. (Where something is, was, or will be.)

- The cafe is **across** the street.
- My friend had a cottage **across** the lake.
- Our office is moving **across** the city.

Through - from one side of something/somebody to another

This has a similar meaning to across, but we use it more for things with some space inside to move. You are inside something for a moment.

- We drove **through** a tunnel. (We were inside a tunnel.)
- The burglar got in **through** the window. (He used the window to get inside the house.)
- The police had to walk **through** the crowd to get to the scene. (They were inside the crowd.)

Across is more common with open spaces

- She walked **across** the field.
- The players skated **across** the ice.

~ Some places can use both prepositions:

She walked through the park. **OK** (She was inside the park.)

She walked across the park. **OK** (She walked from one side to the other.)

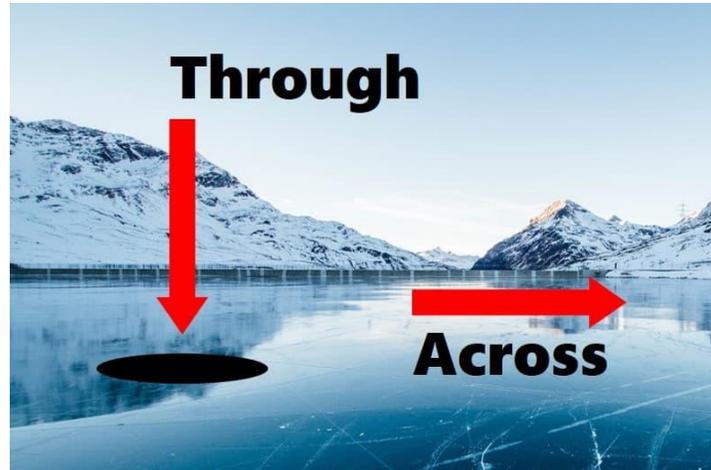
~ Some cannot

We drove ~~across~~ a tunnel. **NG**

The players skated ~~through~~ the ice. **NG** This has a completely different meaning.

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Going across the ice is safe. You are on the other side of the lake.
Going through the ice is dangerous. You are in the water now!



Some more helpful preposition blog posts:

[Adjectives + Prepositions \(95 Common Combinations\)](#)

[Nouns + Prepositions – 75 Real Examples \(Intermediate\)](#)

[General English Preposition Quiz \(Test your Knowledge\)](#)

[Good At or Good In \(or Good With?\) Your complete guide](#)

[Apply TO or Apply FOR? \(Over 30 real examples and a QUIZ\)](#)