

## TEACHING PREPOSITIONS

Otambetova Gulnara Menglimuratovna  
Nukus Olympic and Paralytic Sports Training Center  
Teacher of English

### Abstract

What are prepositions?

They are those little words that help the connection of thoughts, ideas, and descriptions. They help the listener or the reader to know the direction, movement, condition, purpose, cause, manner, quantity, quality, identity, place, and time in the unfolding of any information or a story. Prepositions form a small but important word class, being very frequently used. In fact, the prepositions to, of, in, for, on, with, at, by, from are all in the top 25 words in English. Helping students understand and correctly use prepositions contributes greatly to their fluency. A clear understanding as to what prepositions are actually for is essential for the teacher, although it may not be necessary to go in detail into the grammar points below at all levels. [1, 13]

**Keywords:** Preposition, noun, verb, adjective, English, form.

### Introduction

Prepositions have no particular form. The majority of prepositions are one-word prepositions, but some are two- or three-word phrases known as complex-prepositions:

- **one-word prepositions** (before, into, on)
- **complex prepositions** (according to, but for, in spite of, on account of)

“Complex prepositions” (on account of) should not be confused with “prepositional phrases” (on the table, on account of his age).

Some people claim that a preposition must always come before its object. Although a preposition **usually** precedes its object, it can **sometimes** come after its object. Take the very common “**Where** are you **from**?” and “I am **from England**.” The object of from is clearly Where and England. While one could theoretically say “~~From where are you?~~”, no-one actually does say that. Normal English usage is “Where are you from?” Although prepositions may seem difficult to learn, the task is not insurmountable. There are only 150 prepositions and only about 70 of these are commonly used. What’s more, all single-word prepositions are “closed-class”, meaning they are unlikely to be added to. When giving examples, and where possible, try to show prepositions in context by writing full sentences. This makes it far easier for your students to understand or deduce the meaning.

The function or “job” of a **preposition** is to express the relationship between two words in a sentence, specifically between a **noun, verb or adjective** and a **noun or pronoun\***: [2, 57]

Married **with** Ikram.

Listen **to** classical musics.

\*Strictly speaking this can be a noun (including proper noun), pronoun, noun group or gerund (verb in noun form):

- **noun** (dog, table, love) – They are **in love**.
- **proper noun** (Bangkok, Mary) – I went **to Tashkent**.
- **pronoun** (you, him, us) – She spoke **to him**.
- **noun group** (my first job) – I was poor **before my first job**.
- **gerund** (swimming) – She is passionate **about swimming**.

### Function of a prepositional phrase

A **prepositional phrase** functions as an **adjective or adverb** to modify a **noun, verb or adjective**:

- **the woman beside John** (“beside John” functions as an adjective modifying the noun “woman”)
- **He works before lunch**. (“before lunch” functions as an adverb modifying the verb “works”)
- **happy with it** (“with it” functions as an adverb modifying the adjective “happy”)

### Forms of prepositions

Prepositions have no particular form. The majority of prepositions are one-word prepositions, but some are two- or three-word phrases known as complex-prepositions:

- **one-word prepositions** (before, into, on)
- **complex prepositions** (according to, but for, in spite of, on account of)

“Complex prepositions” (on account of) should not be confused with “prepositional phrases” (on the table, on account of his age).

any prepositions have more than one meaning. The meaning can be literal (**in** the box) or metaphorical (**in** love). The literal meanings fall into several categories, for example:

- **place** – **under** the bed
- **time** – **on** Sunday
- **movement** – **towards** the horizon
- **manner** – **by** train
- **means** – **with** a blunt instrument
- **accompaniment** – **without** a job
- **possession** – a friend **of** mine
- **purpose** – done **for** charity

Note that many prepositions belong to more than one category (eg **on** the table/**on** Monday, **with** her friend/**with** a screwdriver). [3, 61]

The noun or pronoun that follows a preposition forms a ‘prepositional **object**’. If it is a pronoun, it should therefore be in the **objective form** (me, her, them), not subjective form (I, she, they):

- This is from my wife and **me**.

- That's between **him** and **her**.
- Mary gave it to **them**.

Some people claim that a preposition must always come before its object. Although a preposition usually precedes its object, it can sometimes come after its object. Take the very common "Where are you from?" and "I am from England." The object of from is clearly Where and England. While one could theoretically say "From where are you?", no-one actually does say that. Normal English usage is "Where are you from?" [4, 13]

There are four main cases where a preposition may naturally fall at the end of a sentence or clause:

who, where, what questions — What are you interested in?

relative clause — the plan (that) they are working on

infinitive — Do you have someone to go with?

passive — She hates being stared at.

### Many prepositions can also be adverbs

It may help your more grammar-oriented students to recognize the difference between a **preposition** and an **adverb**. A preposition always has an **object**. An adverb does not have an object. [5, 51]

- They are **in the kitchen**. (preposition in has object the kitchen)

Please **come in**. (adverb in has no object)

- There was a doorway **before me**. (preposition before has object me)

I had never **seen it before**. (adverb before has no object)

- I will call **after work**. (preposition after has object work)

He **called** soon **after**. (adverb after has no object)

Although prepositions may seem difficult to learn, the task is not insurmountable. There are only 150 prepositions and only about 70 of these are commonly used. What's more, all single-word prepositions are "closed-class", meaning they are unlikely to be added to.

### Conclusion

Prepositions are words governing, and usually preceding, a noun or pronoun and expressing a relation to another word or element in the clause. But to make your pupils understand the idea, explain to them that prepositions are words which link nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence. Prepositions have no settled form. The most common prepositions are one-word prepositions (on, before, into), however there are two- or three-word phrases known as complex-prepositions that we use in our daily lives (according to, along with, in spite of). In fact, it's interesting to note that prepositions are regarded as a 'closed class' of words in the English language. This means, unlike verbs and nouns, no new words are added to this group over time. In a way, it reflects their role as the functional workhorse of the sentence. They are unassuming and subtle, yet vitally important to the meaning of language.

**References**

1. Seth Lindstromberg (English Prepositions Explained) 2010
2. Galina Kimber (Perfect Prepositions: A Real Life Guide to Using English Prepositions) 2005
3. Brian Tracy (English Prepositions List) 2009
4. Swick Ed. (Practice Makes Perfect: English Pronouns and Prepositions) 2016
5. Farlex International (Complete English Grammar Rules: Examples, Exceptions, Exercises, and Everything You Need to Master) 2016
6. African proverb (the-oxford-dictionary-of-english-grammar-oxford-quick-reference-2nd\_edition) 2016