

Mastering Grammar

Prepositions

- “Prepositions express a **relation in space** between two or more entities or a **relation in time** between two events, or various **other abstract relations** such as **instrument** and **cause**.”
(*Cambridge Grammar of English*, Carter and McCarthy, 2006, p.462).
- A preposition refers to the word or phrase which shows the relationship between one thing and another, linking nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence.

For example:

(1). A relation in **Place** and **Time**:

*We waited **at** the bus stop **for** ten minutes.*

*There is a telephone booth **outside** the bank.*

*What are you wearing **underneath** your coat?*

*She fell asleep **during** the lecture.*

*The police station is **next to** the shopping mall.*

(2). Feelings:

*Are you worried **about** your exam?*

*I was surprised **at** your remarks.*

(3). Other relationships like **Instrument** and **Cause**:

*The girl stabbed the burglar **with** a knife.*

Without your support, I don't think I can finish the project so smoothly.

Use of Prepositions

The use of prepositions is, without doubt, one of the most difficult areas of English grammar. There are over 100 prepositions in English, with one word or more than one word.

One-word Prepositions

aboard	along	at	besides	down	inside	on	round	to	up
about	amid	before	between	during	into	onto	since	towards/towards	upon
above	amidst	behind	beyond	except	like	opposite	than	under	via
across	among	below	but	for	near	outside	through	underneath	with
after	around	beneath	by	from	of	over	throughout	unlike	within
against	as	beside	despite	in	off	past	till	until	without

Two- and three-word Prepositions

according to	as well as	due to	in exchange for	inside of	on account of	prior to
ahead of	because of	except for	in favour of	in spite of	on top of	subsequent to
apart from	but for	for lack of	in front/back of	instead of	out of	such as
as for	by means of	in addition to	in line with	near to	outside of	thanks to
as of	by virtue of	in aid of	in place of	next to	owing to	up to

Use of Prepositions - Exercise 1a

Exercise 1b

Exercise 1c

Exercise 1d



Learn more

<http://www.better-english.com/grammar/prepositions.htm>

<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/quizzes/0101/es-prepositions.html>

<http://www.englishpage.com/prepositions/prepositions.ht>

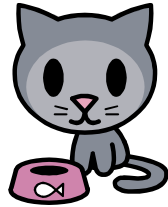
http://www.eslpdf.com/esl_prepositions.html

http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/exercises_list/alle_grammar.htm

<http://www.quia.com/tq/126698.html>

<http://www.quia.com/jg/73573.html>

Exercise 1a – Use of Prepositions



Oh, there is no fish **in** the bowl.

Read the following story and fill in each gap with the most suitable preposition in the box. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

about	above	underneath	for	on	in	at	toward(s)	from
in front of	instead of	inside	under	according to	thanks to	up	outside	

Christine's cat was missing and she started looking around the house (1) _____ it. She opened her closet and looked (2) _____ but the cat was not there. She went to the bedroom and crawled (3) _____ the floor to look (4) _____ the bed. She searched the kitchen and bathroom but found nothing. Since her cat could not be seen anywhere inside the house, Christine decided to go (5) _____ to give it a try. Just as she was (6) _____ to open the door, the doorbell rang. It was her neighbour, Mrs. Chan. Mrs. Chan pointed (7) _____ the top of a nearby tree. "Look, Christine! Your cat is (8) _____ the tree!" Mrs. Chan began to describe how she found the cat. (9) _____ her, she was cleaning the windows when she heard a noise coming (10) _____ the tree (11) _____ her house. She looked (12) _____ and saw the cat (13) _____ one of the branches high (14) _____ the ground. (15) _____ ignoring the cat, Mrs. Chan decided to tell Christine. (16) _____ Mrs. Chan's help, Christine was able to rescue it.

Suggested Answers:

(1) for	(2) inside	(3) on	(4) under/ underneath	(5) outside	(6) about	(7) at/ toward/ towards	(8) in
(9) According to	(10) from	(11) in front of	(12) up	(13) on	(14) above	(15) Instead of	(16) Thanks to

Exercise 1b – Use of Prepositions

Fill in each gap with a suitable preposition in the box.

in	by	for	into	after	at	as	to	from	on
----	----	-----	------	-------	----	----	----	------	----

Inspiration: Being inspired is the key to success as a senior student.

This is what I concluded (1) _____ completing the ABC programme (2) _____ The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Life (3) _____ a postgraduate student (4) _____ the Department of ABC can be fun, or a nightmare, depending (5) _____ what approach you take. I am more than willing to share my thoughts with you (6) _____ this regard.

Comparing studying (7) _____ travelling, I found many interesting parallels. Studying (8) _____ high school is like joining a group tour. So long (9) _____ you don't fall asleep (10) _____ the coach, and you listen to what the tour guide tells you, you shouldn't fail. Studying (11) _____ a Bachelor's degree is like going for a package tour. Many things have been prepared (12) _____ you but you still have to put extra effort (13) _____ your study. Studying (14) _____ a Master's degree is like backpacking. You have to plan the trip yourself and take the initiative to explore everything. Sometimes you get help (15) _____ experienced travellers, the lecturers. At the doctorate level, you will explore new ground untouched (16) _____ others.

Some Master's students may get lost (17) _____ first because they don't realise that a different approach (18) _____ their earlier study experience is called (19) _____. They study hard reading the lecture notes (20) _____ they did before. They wonder why so little has been taught while the scope for their assignments is so broad. They have not yet realised that the lecture notes show them the directions, not destinations. However, once you realise this and adopt the attitude (21) _____ a backpacker, life is fun. The libraries here are treasure islands. The internet is your highway. And the professors are black-belt masters. Challenge them. They welcome your questions. They don't teach you, they inspire. How many chances do you have (22) _____ life to have your work assessed (23) _____ a world class scholar?

Adapted from and inspired by an original article by Ho Wai Man

(1) after	(2) at	(3) as	(4) in	(5) on	(6) in	(7) to	(8) in
(9) as	(10) in	(11) for	(12) for	(13) into	(14) for	(15) from	(16) by
(17) at	(18) from	(19) for	(20) as	(21) of	(22) in	(23) by	

Exercise 1c – Use of Prepositions

Fill in each gap with a suitable preposition.

An Open Letter from Prof. Charles and Mrs May Wan Kao

Since the announcement (1) _____ 6 October 2009 that Charles has been awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize (2) _____ Physics, we have received messages (3) _____ friends from all (4) _____ the world (5) _____ the Internet, fax, and email. We are overwhelmed (6) _____ the sea of congratulatory messages from so many people, and the many requests (7) _____ interviews from the media.

A Nobel Laureate of Chinese ethnicity is a rare event and we understand the outpouring (8) _____ happiness and pride (9) _____ our people throughout the world wherever they live. The Nobel Prize is an international prize and has been awarded (10) _____ work done internationally.

Charles Kao was born (11) _____ Shanghai, China, did his primary research in 1966 (12) _____ Standard Telecommunication Laboratories (STL) in Harlow, UK, followed through with work in the USA at ITT, over the following 20 years, to develop fiber optics (13) _____ a commercial product and finally came to CUHK, Hong Kong (14) _____ 1987 to pass on his knowledge and expertise to a new generation of students and businessmen. Charles really does belong (15) _____ the world!

In this open letter, we would like to thank all who have concern (16) _____ his health. Unfortunately there is no cure at present for Alzheimer's. Charles shares this problem of coping (17) _____ Alzheimer with other eminent persons, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, to name a few. Charles keeps fit playing tennis and with other exercises. He does not smoke, and he enjoys eating and drinking (18) _____ healthy moderation and sleeps well too. The memory loss is getting more severe, but he enjoys life.

He is eminently proud (19) _____ his past achievements and excited (20) _____ becoming a Nobel Laureate – an unexpected award. The press and media have interviewed him and he is happy that they have found all the facts they need. So he is more than ready to return (21) _____ a quiet and undisturbed life now, and he asks that the media respect this.

Our greetings to everyone in Hong Kong, to staff, faculty and students past and present of CUHK, to all our very good friends and especially to our tennis friends. Thank you (22) _____ all your good wishes and congratulations. Now you know who is responsible (23) _____ the fiber optical cables that enable all the excessive information, both true and false, good and bad, that circulate (24) _____ the Internet.

Charles and May Wan Kao
13 October 2009

Source: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/cpr/charleskao/letter-e.html>

Suggested Answers:

1. on	2. in	3. from	4. over	5. via	6. by	7. for	8. of
9. for	10. for	11. in	12. at	13. into	14. in	15. to	16. for
17. with	18. in	19. of	20. about/at	21. to	22. for	23. for	24. on

Exercise 1d – Use of Prepositions

Read the text below. Fill in each blank with a suitable preposition. Put an “X” if no preposition is needed.

Attack burns

A five- year-old boy and a number of tourists and others were hurt in an acid attack (1) _____ Eastern District (2) _____ last night - just three hours (3) _____ the police had turned on surveillance cameras in the area.

It is the fifth of this kind of attack (4) _____ last November. It is being viewed (5) _____ a direct threat to the security.

As detectives searched surveillance footage (6) _____ last night, 380 officers swept the area to hunt (7) _____ the attacker or attackers.

The Commissioner of Police Chris Smith promised to track (8) _____ those behind it.

Some of those hurt said the corrosive liquid rained down just before 9.30 pm (9) _____ the junction of North and South streets.

The bottle used was 13-15 centimeters long, contained what was probably acid and was similar (10) _____ those used (11) _____ the previous two attacks.

It was found (12) _____ the road outside 123 North Street still releasing a grayish gas. The area is only 60 meters (13) _____ the first attack in November and less than 100 meters from the second hurt (14) _____ March 23.

Many of those hurt were treated (15) _____ the spot for head, shoulder and hand injuries while others were sent to nearby hospitals.

Nurses poured filtered water (16) _____ burns before they were treated and bandaged.

A victim hit by the bottle said he was not aware it was corrosive until he felt a burning sensation. A nearby shopkeeper helped him wash off the liquid, he said.

Mr Wong, who works (17) _____ an appliance shop, said he saw people hurrying away before he realized it was another acid attack. He had noticed some of them had holes in their clothes (18) _____ a result of acid burns.

The government decided to install surveillance cameras overlooking South Street (19) _____ the earlier attacks which injured nearly 80 people (20) _____ total.

A district councillor Mary Lee, who is in charge (21) _____ a working group for the installation of the "sky eyes," confirmed they had been (22) _____ operation (23) _____ 1.30 pm yesterday.

"This acid throwing is obviously a challenge (24) _____ the police. It is a dreadful crime. The operation of the sky eyes was not supposed to be known (25) _____ outsiders and the district council had planned to announce it after a meeting later this week," she said.

The Island East Headquarters senior superintendent said 15 males and 13 females suffered (26) _____ minor injuries. One was a five-year-old boy.

"Six units of detectives (27) _____ Island East regional crime unit, the anti-triad unit, blue-beret police officers and other frontline officers were dispatched (28) _____ the scene to conduct an exhaustive search. Police will work in liaison (29) _____ the District Council to inspect the surveillance images captured by the "sky eyes" to help the investigation," the superintendent said.

The police have not ruled (30) _____ any motive for the attack.

Suggested Answers:

(1) in	(2) X	(3) after	(4) since	(5) as	(6) X	(7) for	(8) down
(9) at	(10) to	(11) in	(12) on	(13) from	(14) on	(15) on	(16) on
(17) for	(18) as	(19) after	(20) in	(21) of	(22) in	(23) since	(24) to
(25) by	(26) X	(27) from	(28) to	(29) with	(30) out		

What can prepositions tell us?

Drag and drop the answer into the appropriate gap.

- **Time**
- **Position**
- **Location**
- **Direction**

1. It may tell you the _____ a thing is in relation to something else.

*e.g. The students conducted an experiment **in** the laboratory.*

2. It may tell you the _____ something is in relation to another event.

*e.g. **After** dinner, we went for a walk.*

3. A preposition may tell you the _____ of something in relation to something else.

*e.g. The gentle, brown cat slept **beside** the fluffy white rabbit.*

4. It may also tell you the _____ something is travelling in relation to something else.

*e.g. Who is that man walking **towards** us?*

Suggested answers: 1. Location 2. Time 3. Position 4. Direction

Prepositions *at*, *on*, and *in*

Prepositions of Place and Location: *at*, *on*, and *in*

- In general, we use:

at* for a **POINT

in* for an **ENCLOSED SPACE

on* for a **SURFACE

<i>at</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● for specific addresses E.g. <i>Samantha Tse lives at 55 King's Road.</i>
<i>on</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● to designate names of streets, avenues, roads, etc. E.g. <i>Her house is on King's Road.</i>

<i>in</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● for the names of land areas (towns, counties, states, countries, and continents) E.g. <i>She lives in Kowloon.</i> <i>Kowloon is in Hong Kong.</i> <i>Hong Kong is in Asia.</i>
------------------	---

- Notice the use of the prepositions of location ***at***, ***in*** and ***on*** in these standard expressions:

<i>at</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>No Preposition</i>
at home	in a car	on a bus	downstairs
at work	in a taxi	on a train	downtown
	in a helicopter	on a plane	inside
at university / college	in a boat	on a ship	outside
at the office	in a lift (elevator)	on a bicycle/ motorbike	upstairs
at the top	in the newspaper	on a horse/ elephant	uptown
at the bottom	in the sky	on the radio/ on television	
at the side	in a row	on the left/ right	
at reception	in West Street (e.g. <i>I live in West Street</i> - British English)	on the way	
		on the floor	
		on the ceiling	
at school*	in school*		
at class*	in (the) class*		
at the library*	in the library*		
	in (the) bed*	on the bed*	

*** You may sometimes use different prepositions for these locations.**

Prepositions of Time: ***at***, ***on***, and ***in***

<i>at</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to designate specific/precise times E.g. <i>The lesson starts at 10:30 a.m.</i> ● Also <i>at night, at noon, at lunchtime, at the weekend, at Christmas/Easter, at the same time, at present, at sunrise/sunset, at the moment</i>
<i>on</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to designate days and dates E.g. <i>My sister is coming on Wednesday.</i> E.g. <i>We will have a meeting on the First of February.</i>
<i>in</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● for nonspecific times during a day, a month, a season, or a year E.g. <i>He gets up very early in the evening.</i> <i>He will have a long vacation in December.</i> <i>He was born in winter.</i> <i>He started the job in 2009.</i>

- Do not use **at**, **on** or **in** before *next*, *last*, *this*, *every*, *all*, *each*, *some*, *any* and *one*.

E.g. *She will come back **next** Monday.*

*We went to New York **last** August.*

*I will call you **this** evening.*

*They play badminton **every** weekend.*

- Do not use **at**, **on** or **in** before *tomorrow* and *yesterday*.

E.g. *Let's see the movie **tomorrow evening**.*

*We had the meeting **yesterday afternoon**.*

Prepositions of Time: *for* and *since*

<i>for</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● when we measure time (seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years) E.g. <i>We danced for two hours.</i> <i>He has lived in Hong Kong for eight months.</i> <i>She has been doing the research for five years.</i>
<i>since</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● with a specific date or time E.g. <i>She has worked here since 1999.</i> <i>He has been waiting in the conference room since 9:30 a.m.</i>

Prepositions of Movement: *to*, *into*, *onto*, *out of*, *off*, *toward(s)* and No Preposition

<i>to, onto, into</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to express movement towards a place E.g. <i>They always walk to school together.</i> <i>The cat jumped onto the table.</i> <i>She fell into the sea.</i>
<i>toward, towards</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● variant spellings of the same preposition of movement E.g. <i>They rushed toward me.</i> <i>Darkness travels towards light, but blindness towards death.</i>
<i>out of, off</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to express movement from a place E.g. <i>He came out of the office.</i> <i>Take your feet off the seat.</i>
No preposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● with the words <i>home</i>, <i>downtown</i>, <i>uptown</i>, <i>inside</i>, <i>outside</i>, <i>downstairs</i>, <i>upstairs</i> E.g. <i>The boy went upstairs to look for the cat.</i> <i>When will you go home?</i> <i>They all went outside to see the sunset.</i>

Exercies 2 – “at, in, on”



Learn more

- **Prepositions for Time, Place, and Introducing Objects** <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/594/01/>
<http://www.better-english.com/grammar/timepreps.htm>
- **Practise *on*, *in*, and *at* in different contexts** <http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/200/grammar/prepo.htm>
- **Prepositions *in/at/on* (notes and quiz)** http://esl.about.com/library/grammar/blgr_prep1.htm
- **Prepositions ‘*at, in, on*’ games** <http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CiLL/eap/>

Exercise 2 – “at, in, on”



Read the following dialogue and complete the sentences using *at*, *in* or *on*.

Peter: The bus is supposed to come (1) _____ 8:20am and it’s already 8:30am.

Jane: I hope it comes soon. I don’t want to be late. What time do you have to be (2) _____ class?

Peter: My first class is (3) _____ 9:00 am, but my professor is never (4) _____ time for class.

Jane: How lucky! My professor gives us penalty for being late. I usually arrive just (5) _____ time, just before my professor starts taking marks off students who are late.

Peter: I understand it is always very hard to wake up (6) _____ the morning, especially (7) _____ Mondays.

Jane: Yes, I know. I tend to study late (8) _____ night and find it very hard to get up the next day. It gets worse (9) _____ the winter.

Peter: Oh! The bus is finally here. Let’s get (10) _____!

Suggested Answers:

(1) at	(2) in	(3) at	(4) on	(5) in	(6) in	(7) on	(8) at
(9) in	(10) on						

Prepositions and Adjectives, Nouns, and Verbs

After many adjectives, nouns and verbs, we use particular prepositions. Following are some common examples of these combinations:

Adjective + Preposition

angry*, annoyed*, excited, furious*, happy*, nervous, worried	about
angry*, bad, clever, excited, expert, good, hopeless	at
astonished, amazed, surprised, shocked	at/by
eligible, famous, responsible, notorious, sorry, well known	for
afraid, ashamed, aware, capable, conscious, envious, fond, frightened, full, jealous, made, proud, short, suspicious, tired	of
addicted, engaged, married, similar, sympathetic	to
angry*, annoyed*, bored, disappointed, furious*, happy*, please	with
different	from/to
interested, involved	in
keen	on
disqualified	from

*angry *at/about* sth / *with* sb

*annoyed/ furious/happy *about* sth / *with* sb

Noun + Preposition

approval, awareness, cause, example, hatred, love, understanding	of
concern, desire, fondness, hope, grasp, need, reason, request, respect, thirst	for
belief, increase/decrease, rise/fall, interest, success, participation	in
answer, invitation, reaction, reply, solution,	to

Verb + Preposition

account for	depend on	make up
apologize to (sb)/ for (sth/sb)	die of	pay for
apply for	differ from	prepare for
believe in	dispose of	rely on
belong to	focus on	search for
benefit from	give up	stem from
bring up	grow up	study for
care about/ for*	insist on	suffer from (a particular illness or physical problem)
coincide with	laugh at / smile at	talk to/with (sb) / about/of (sb/sth)
comply with	listen to	think about/ of *
cope with	look at/ for/ after/ into*	wait for
concentrate on	look forward to	worry about

*care about = think sb/sth is important; care for = look after

*look at = use the eyes; look for = try to find; look after = take care of; look into = investigate

*think about = use the mind, e.g. *He looks sad. What is he thinking about?*

think of/about = consider, e.g. *I'm thinking of/about changing my plan.*

think of = have as an opinion about, e.g. *What do you think of Peter? He is very handsome.*

= bring to the mind, e.g. *I can't think of any reason why the accident happened.*

Exercise 3 - Nouns, Adjectives, Verbs and Prepositions



Learn more

Prepositions with nouns, adjectives and verbs (sentence construction) <http://moodle.citylit.ac.uk/moodle/file.php/1/Study%20skills%20work%20sheets/grammar/intermediate/Microsoft%20Word%20-%204.17%20Prepositions%20with%20nouns,%20adjectives%20and%20verbs.pdf>

Prepositions after nouns, adjectives and verbs (matching exercise) <http://www.evt.edunet.tn/depinteg/projetstic/seconde/anglais/intasks/rep9.htm>

Prepositions with nouns, verbs and adjectives (gap-filling exercise) <http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL/eap/2004/u2/pg34preps.htm>

Preposition with Adjective (rules and exercises) http://www.learn4good.com/languages/evrd_grammar/adjectives_prepos.htm

Nouns + Prepositions (notes) and more preposition exercises http://esl.about.com/library/grammar/blgr_prep5.htm

Adjectives Prepositions Combinations - about /at/by/for/from (quizzes) http://esl.about.com/library/quiz/blgrquiz_prep7.htm

Exercise 3 - Adjectives, Verbs, Nouns and Prepositions

Choose the most suitable preposition.

1. Prof. Charles Kao is one of the most prominent scientists in the world. All his students have great respect (in, on, to, for) _____ him.
2. The belief (of, in, at, for) _____ aliens and UFOs is absurd!
3. Jessica is angry (at, with, about, of) _____ her boyfriend for not showing up for the movie.
4. He apologized (at, for, to, on) _____ her (at, for, to, on) _____ being late by treating her dinner.
5. My parents are worried (at, of, for, about) _____ the family's financial problems.
6. Do not ask me to fix your laptop. I am not familiar (to, of, with, about) _____ computers.
7. This book belongs (to, of, for, with) _____ my sister.
8. If you give (out, up, of, off) _____ now, you will never finish the project.
9. Please take some time to think (at, on, about, to) _____ what you want to do in the future.
10. Kate and Frank are in the library studying (at, for, with, by) _____ their test next week.
11. The scientists have found the best solution (of, by, for, to) _____ the problem.
12. The police decided to investigate the cause (of, by, for, to) _____ his death.

Suggested Answers:

(1) for	(2) in	(3) with	(4) to... for	(5) about	(6) with	(7) to	(8) up
(9) about	(10) for	(11) to	(12) of				

Prepositional Phrases (Prep + NP)

A prepositional phrase is a preposition followed by a noun or noun phrase. For example, in the sentence “The students are having a grammar lesson in the classroom”, the word “in” is a preposition introducing the prepositional phrase “in the classroom”.

A prepositional phrase looks like this: Preposition + Noun / Pronoun / Gerund

e.g. I think you should *apologise to your mother* (Prep + Noun).

I must *apologise for disturbing* (Prep + Gerund) you.

Some uses of English prepositional phrases:

1) As a modifier to a verb

E.g. *Polar bears usually sleep throughout the winter.*

They danced in the ballroom for hours.

2) As a modifier to a noun

E.g. *The weather in April is very pleasant in Tokyo.*

My father likes cheeses from Italy with live bacteria.

3) As the complement of a verb

E.g. *Peter insisted on seeing her.*

You should dispose of these old newspapers.

4) As the complement of a noun

E.g. *He had a strong thirst for knowledge.*

They suggested an amendment to the proposal.

5) As the complement of an adjective or adverb

E.g. *The government should be attentive to their needs.*

They stayed separately from their parents.

6) As the complement of another preposition

E.g. *You can play computer games until **after** supper.*

*The cat ran from **under** the bed.*

We can begin a sentence with a prepositional phrase in academic writing.

*E.g. **With confidence**, the determined athlete took up the challenge.*

***Under the big sofa**, the mischievous cats were playing happily.*

***Inside the palace garden**, there are all sorts of beautiful flowers.*

***Along the wall** crawled the large, slimy worm.*

We can use a prepositional phrase to express the less important idea in academic writing.

For example:

Peter worked very hard but he failed his exam and everybody felt disappointed.

>> ***Despite his hard work**, Peter failed his exam and everybody felt disappointed.*

Labour costs are rising and manufacturers have to relocate their factories to places with cheaper labour costs.

>> ***Because of rising labour costs**, manufacturers have to relocate their factories to places with cheaper labour costs.*

Avoid excessive prepositional phrases in academic writing

Prepositional phrases are necessary in writing, but they are often overused in ways that make writing problematic and too tedious.

Example 1:

*The decline **in** the number **of** businesses owned **by** locals **in** the town **of** Edinburg is a demonstration **of** the increasing hardship faced **in** rural communities **in** the northeast.
(Problem: prepositional phrases are used in excess.)*

An improved version:

*Edinburg's declining number **of** locally owned businesses demonstrates the increased hardship faced **by** northeast rural communities. (It has the same meaning but there are fewer prepositional phrases.)*

Example 2:

The major aim of this study was to determine the perceived effects of smoking on the health of patients over a period of 3 years (from 2005 to 2008) in which respondents to the study had been surveyed. (Problem: prepositional phrases are overused.)

An improved version:

This study examined how smoking affected the respondents' health from 2005 to 2008. (The same meaning with fewer prepositional phrases)

Exercise 4 - Use of Prepositional Phrases in Academic Writing



Learn more

Prepositional Phrases

(exercises) <http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CiLL/eap/2004/u2/pg34ex3prepositional%20phrases.htm>

Edit Strings of Prepositional Phrases <http://collegewriting.org/index.php/revision/editing/edit-strings-of-prepositional-phrases>

Features of Academic Writing <http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/complex.htm>

Improving Your Writing Style http://www.bestessaytips.com/improve_writing_style.php

Strategies for Reducing Wordiness <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/style/wordiness.html>

Exercise 4 – Use of Prepositional Phrases in Academic Writing

Use a prepositional phrase (Prep + NP) to express the less important idea in academic writing.

e.g. Labour costs are rising and manufacturers have to relocate their factories to places with cheaper labour costs. (Because of)

>> *Because of rising labour costs*, manufacturers have to relocate their factories to places with cheaper labour costs.

- 1) We have done a study and found that there is a significant relationship between school shootings and playing violent video games. (According to)

- 2) We put a great effort into the project but we still failed to finish it before the deadline. (In spite of)

- 3) We finally obtained the government assistance and we were able to use an up-to-date sampling frame from which to select our sample. (As a result of)

- 4) Many countries around the world are facing economic downturns. However, China's economy has recorded phenomenal growth for at least five consecutive years. (In contrast to)

- 5) Our key projects proceeded successfully because we paid great care and attention to details.
(With)

Suggested Answers:

1. ***According to our study***, there is a significant relationship between school shootings and playing violent video games.
2. ***In spite of our great effort***, we failed to finish the project before the deadline.
3. ***As a result of obtaining the government assistance***, we were able to use an up-to-date sampling frame from which to select our sample.
4. ***In contrast to the economic downturns of many countries around the world***, China's economy has recorded phenomenal growth for at least five consecutive years.
5. ***With great care and attention to details***, our key projects proceeded successfully.

Prepositions

References and Resources

For basic information about prepositions, see the following links to EnglishCLUB.com:

Prepositions lists <http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/prepositions-list.htm>

A simple rule for prepositions <http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/prepositions-rule.htm>

The following websites contain explanations of the use of prepositions:

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions.htm>

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/preps/preps.htm>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/594/01/>

<http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/200/grammar/prepo.htm>

<http://www.hancockcollege.edu/owl/pdf/Parts%20of%20Speech/How%20to%20use%20prepositions%20effectively.pdf>

<http://www.writingcentre.uottawa.ca/hypergrammar/preposit.html>

The following websites contain quizzes and games on prepositions:

<http://www.better-english.com/grammar/prepositions.htm>

<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/quizzes/0101/es-prepositions.html>

<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/quizzes/fb-bd-preposition.html>

<http://www.englishpage.com/prepositions/prepositions.ht>

http://www.eslpdf.com/esl_prepositions.html

http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/exercises_list/alle_grammar.htm

<http://www.quia.com/tq/126698.html>

<http://www.quia.com/jg/73573.html>

Books on Prepositions

- *Test Your Prepositions* by Peter Watcyn-Jones & Jake Allsop
- *Collins Cobuild English Guides 1: Prepositions* by John Sinclair
- *The Preposition Book* (Practice toward mastering English prepositions) by Tom Cole
- *Cambridge Grammar of English* by Ronald Carter & Michael McCarthy, pp. 462-469
- *Collins Cobuild Student's Grammar* by Dave Willis, pp. 42-43, 56-57, 74-79 and 156-157
- *Cassell's Students' English Grammar* by Jake Allsop, pp. 104-123
- *A University Grammar of English* by Randolph Quirk and Sidney Greenbaum, pp. 143-165
- *English Grammar in Use* by Raymond Murphy, pp. 228-260
- *Advanced Grammar in Use* by Martin Hewings, pp. 176-189
- *Understanding and Using English Grammar* by Betty Schramper Azar, A-2 and A-24
- *Using English Grammar* by Edward Woods and Nicole McLeod, pp. 210-213 and 283-284
- *Oxford Practice Grammar with answers* by John Eastwood, pp. 284-316
- *Advanced Language Practice with key* by Michael Vince, pp. 131-143