Preposition Functions

Prepositions are frequently used in English to relate a noun or pronoun to some other word in the sentence. They express a number of relationships, including time, location, manner, means, quantity, purpose, and state or condition. You will find examples of preposition usage in your reading. Study them in the context in which they appear.

To Show Time:

- **When does it happen?**
- **about** about noon (approximately)
- **after** after the game
- **at** at five o'clock
- **on** on Tuesday (weekday)
- **past** quarter past three
- **to** quarter to three

To Show Place or Direction:

- **Where is it?**
- **Where is it going?**
- **around** she walked around the car
- **at** we were at the restaurant
- **down** they lived down the hall
- **from** we drove from Utah to Iowa
- **in** he lives in a trailer
- **of** inside of the house
- **on** on the train (bus, plane)
- **through** we drove through the tunnel
- **to** he went to Prague
- **up** he walked up the stairs

To Show Manner:

- **How did it happen?**
- **How was it done?**
- **by** by doing it right, you save time
- **in** the room was in a turmoil.
- **like** He looks like a hero.
- **on** I swear it on my word of honor
- **with** He ate it with a fork.

To Show Means or Agent:

- **Who or what did it?**
- **What was it done with?**
- **by** he was hit by a ball
- **from** his success came from planning.
- **in** he takes pleasure in it
- **on** they live on fruit
- **with** he cut the bread with a knife
To Show Purpose:
*Why was this done?*

for  He bought it for them.
     She went to the city for sightseeing.
     He loved her for her thoughtfulness.
     I asked you for it.
     We looked for it.

To Show State or Condition:
*How or where is it?*

at  My friend is at work.
     She is at home.
by  They are by themselves. (alone)
in  He is in a state of confusion.
on  He is on duty. (subject to duty)

To Show Quantity or Measure:
*How much? How long?*

for  We drove for twenty miles.
     We bought it for ten cents.
by  We bought them by the kilo.

Prepositions with Particular Verbs

- account for (meaning *explain*)
- agree on (something)
- agree with (someone)
- apologize to
- apply for
- approve of
- argue with (someone)
- ask for
- believe in
- belong to
- blame (someone) for (something)
- blame (something) on (someone)
- borrow from
- call on (upon)
- care for
- compliment (someone) on
- come from
- consent to
- consist of
- convince (someone) of (something)
- decide upon
- depend on, upon
- get rid of
- hear about
- hear from
- hear of
- insist on, upon
- invite (someone) to
- laugh at
- listen for
- listen to
- look at
- look for
- look forward to
- object to
- plan on
- provide for
- provide with
- recover from
- remind (someone) of
- search for
- see about
- substitute for
- talk about
- talk of
- telephone to
- think about
- think of
- wait for (meaning *anticipate*)
- wait on (meaning *serve*)