

Prepositions: Time and Place

Prepositions are used to clarify and communicate many ideas by showing the relationship of nouns or pronouns to other parts of a sentence. Prepositions that identify time and place are the types of relationships described here.

1. A Specific Time: On, At, In

Days: **On**

- My final is **on** Friday
- My classes begin **on** Wednesday.

Noon, night, midnight, and specific times of day: **At**

- I ate lunch **at** noon.
- My class ends **at** 4:15 p.m.

Other parts of the day, months, years, seasons: **In**

- **In** winter, we usually go skiing **in** the mornings.

2. Extended time: Since, Within, For, By, During From/to, From/until

- I have lived in Stillwater **since** August. (*I moved to Stillwater in August and am still living here.*)
- I must find a job **within** the week. (*Before the week ends, I have to find a job.*)
- I stood in line **for** 2 hours. (*I spent 2 hours standing in line.*)
- I will have 32 credit hours **by** May. (*When it is May, I will have earned 32 credit hours.*)
- He was a cook **during** the war. (*While the war was progressing, he was a cook.*)
- The T.V. show ran **from** 1992 **to** 2002. (*The show began in 1992 and ended in 2002.*)
- The fall semester is **from** August **until** December. (*It begins in August and ends in December.*)

3. Location: In, Inside, On, At, Above, Over, Beneath, Under, Below, Underneath, Near, By, Next to, Between, Among, Opposite.

In: the place itself; **Inside:** within the place; **On:** the surface; **At:** the general area.

- I will meet you **at** the parking area. (*The general area*)
- I will meet you **in** the restaurant. (*The place itself*)
- The book is **on** the table. (*On the surface*)
- My coat is **inside** the car. (*Within the place*)

Above and Over: higher than a certain point.

- A bird flew **over** my head.
- I hung the mirror **above** the shelf.
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- He was hiding **under** the table.
- I hung the shelf **below** the mirror.
- I found the assignment sheet **underneath** my notebook.



Beneath, Under, Below, and Underneath: lower than a certain point.

- The boxes are stored **beneath** the staircase.
- The child hid **under** the bed.
- He wears his nametag **below** the pocket of his shirt.
- They had a picnic **underneath** the branches of a willow tree.

Next to, Between, Opposite, Near, By, Among: close to a certain point.

- My book is **next to** the computer.
- I sit **between** John and Mary in my class.
- The building is **opposite** the big oak tree.
- I live **near** the university.
- There is a water fountain **by** the stairwell.
- There is a pen **among** those pencils.

Note: Be careful about confusing **near** and **by** when used together. Together, they do not make a preposition but actually form adverbs and adjectives. **Near by** is an adverb and **nearby** is an adjective:

- We can take my car because I parked near by. (Adverb)
- I grabbed a nearby pen and began writing down my ideas. (Adjective)

Additional Resources:

Harris, M. (2006). *Prentice Hall Reference Guide*. (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Ruszkiewicz, J., Friend, C., & Hairston, M. (2007). *The Scott Foresman: Handbook for Writers*. (8th ed.).

Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Tufte, V. (2006). *Artful Sentences: Syntax as Style*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press.