

Prepositions

The following table contains rules for some of the most frequently used prepositions in English:

Prepositions – Time

English	Usage	Example
on	days of the week	on Monday
in	months / seasons time of day year after a certain period of time (when?)	in August / in winter in the morning in 2006 in an hour
at	for night for weekend a certain point of time (when?)	at night at the weekend at half past nine
since	from a certain point of time (past till now)	since 1980
for	over a certain period of time (past till now)	for 2 years
ago	a certain time in the past	2 years ago
before	earlier than a certain point of time	before 2004
to	telling the time	ten to six (5:50)
past	telling the time	ten past six (6:10)
to / till / until	marking the beginning and end of a period of time	from Monday to/till Friday
till / until	in the sense of how long something is going to last	He is on holiday until Friday.
by	in the sense of at the latest up to a certain time	I will be back by 6 o'clock. By 11 o'clock, I had read five pages.

Prepositions – Place (Position and Direction)

English	Usage	Example
in	room, building, street, town, country book, paper etc. car, taxi picture, world	in the kitchen, in London in the book in the car, in a taxi in the picture, in the world
at	meaning next to, by an object for table for events place where you are to do something typical (watch a film, study, work)	at the door, at the station at the table at a concert, at the party at the cinema, at school, at work

English	Usage	Example
on	attached for a place with a river being on a surface for a certain side (left, right) for a floor in a house for public transport for television, radio	the picture on the wall London lies on the Thames. on the table on the left on the first floor on the bus, on a plane on TV, on the radio
by, next to, beside	left or right of somebody or something	Jane is standing by / next to / beside the car.
under	on the ground, lower than (or covered by) something else	the bag is under the table
below	lower than something else but above ground	the fish are below the surface
over	covered by something else meaning more than getting to the other side (also across) overcoming an obstacle	put a jacket over your shirt over 16 years of age walk over the bridge climb over the wall
above	higher than something else, but not directly over it	a path above the lake
across	getting to the other side (also over) getting to the other side	walk across the bridge swim across the lake
through	something with limits on top, bottom and the sides	drive through the tunnel
to	movement to person or building movement to a place or country for bed	go to the cinema go to London / Ireland go to bed
into	enter a room / a building	go into the kitchen / the house
towards	movement in the direction of something (but not directly to it)	go 5 steps towards the house
onto	movement to the top of something	jump onto the table
from	in the sense of where from	a flower from the garden

Other important Prepositions

English	Usage	Example
from	who gave it	a present from Jane
of	who/what does it belong to what does it show	a page of the book the picture of a palace
by	who made it	a book by Mark Twain
on	walking or riding on horseback entering a public transport vehicle	on foot, on horseback get on the bus
in	entering a car / Taxi	get in the car
off	leaving a public transport vehicle	get off the train
out of	leaving a car / Taxi	get out of the taxi
by	rise or fall of something travelling (other than walking or horse riding)	prices have risen by 10 percent by car, by bus
at	for age	she learned Russian at 45
about	for topics, meaning what about	we were talking about you

Exercise 1 -- Prepositions – Place

Fill the gaps with the correct prepositions.

1. We live _____ London.
2. Would you like to go _____ the cinema tonight?
3. No, thanks. I was _____ the cinema yesterday.
4. We are going _____ holiday next week.
5. There is a bridge _____ the river.
6. The flight from Leipzig to London was _____ Frankfurt.
7. _____ my wall, there are many picture postcards.
8. Who is the person _____ this picture?
9. Come _____ the sitting room, we want to watch TV.
10. Munich lies 530 meters _____ sea level.

Exercise 2 -- Prepositions – Time

Fill in the correct prepositions.

1. Peter is playing tennis _____ Sunday.
2. My brother's birthday is _____ the 5th of November.
3. My birthday is _____ May.
4. We are going to see my parents _____ the weekend.
5. _____ 1666, a great fire broke out in London.

6. I don't like walking alone in the streets _____ night.
7. What are you doing _____ the afternoon?
8. My friend has been living in Canada _____ two years.
9. I have been waiting for you _____ seven o'clock.
10. I will have finished this essay _____ Friday.

Exercise 3 Prepositions – Time

Fill in the correct prepositions.

1. What are you doing _____ the weekend?
2. I don't know yet. Maybe I'll go to the cinema _____ Saturday.
3. That's interesting. I haven't been to the cinema _____ so many years.
4. We could go there together _____ the afternoon.
5. That would be great. But I would prefer to go there _____ the evening. I am visiting my grandma _____ Saturday.
6. That's okay. The film starts _____ eight o'clock.
7. I can pick you up _____ half _____ seven. How long does the film last?
8. It lasts _____ two hours and forty-five minutes.
9. _____ eight _____ a quarter _____ eleven.
10. That's right. But I must hurry home _____ the film. I have to be home _____ eleven o'clock.

Exercise 4 –

Decide whether to use “*since*” or “*for*”.

since	if the starting point is given (two o'clock, last Friday, 1998)
for	if the period of time is given (twenty minutes, two days, one year)

1. I have been waiting _____ 4 o'clock.
2. Sue has only been waiting _____ 20 minutes.
3. Tim and Tina have been learning English _____ six years.
4. Fred and Frida have been learning French _____ 1998.
5. Joe and Josephine have been going out together _____ Valentine's Day.
6. I haven't been on holiday _____ last July.
7. Mary has been saving her money _____ many years.
8. I haven't eaten anything _____ breakfast.
9. You have been watching TV _____ hours.
10. We have been living here _____ 2 months.

Exercise 5

Complete the exercise with the correct prepositions.

1. If you want to go _____ bus, you have to go _____ the bus stop.
2. You look _____ the time table.
3. Then you wait _____ your bus.
4. When the bus arrives, you get _____ the bus.
5. You buy a ticket _____ the driver or show your ticket _____ the driver.
6. When you arrive _____ your destination, you get _____ the bus.
7. Sometimes you even have to change buses _____ another bus stop.

ANSWERS

Exercise 1

1. We live in London.
2. Would you like to go to the cinema tonight?
3. No, thanks. I was at the cinema yesterday.
4. We are going on holiday next week.
5. There is a bridge across the river.
6. The flight from Leipzig to London was via Frankfurt.
7. On my wall, there are many picture postcards.
8. Who is the person in this picture?
9. Come into the sitting room, we want to watch TV.
10. Munich lies 530 meters above sea level.

Exercise 2

1. Peter is playing tennis on Sunday.
2. My brother's birthday is on the 5th of November.
3. My birthday is in May.
4. We are going to see my parents at the weekend.
5. In 1666, a great fire broke out in London.
6. I don't like walking alone in the streets at night.
7. What are you doing in the afternoon?
8. My friend has been living in Canada for two years.
9. I have been waiting for you since seven o'clock.
10. I will have finished this essay by Friday.

Exercise 3

1. What are you doing at the weekend?
2. I don't know yet. Maybe I'll go to the cinema on Saturday.
3. That's interesting. I haven't been to the cinema for so many years.
4. We could go there together in the afternoon.

5. That would be great. But I would prefer to go there in the evening. I am visiting my grandma on Saturday.
6. That's okay. The film starts at eight o'clock.
7. I can pick you up at half past seven. How long does the film last?
8. It lasts for two hours and forty-five minutes.
9. From eight till a quarter to eleven.
10. That's right. But I must hurry home after the film. I have to be home by eleven o'clock.

Exercise 4

1. I have been waiting since 4 o'clock.
2. Sue has only been waiting for 20 minutes.
3. Tim and Tina have been learning English for six years.
4. Fred and Frida have been learning French since 1998.
5. Joe and Josephine have been going out together since Valentine's Day.
6. I haven't been on holiday since last July.
7. Mary has been saving her money for many years.
8. I haven't eaten anything since breakfast.
9. You have been watching TV for hours.
10. We have been living here for 2 months.

Exercise 5

1. If you want to go by bus, you have to go to the bus stop.
2. You look at the time table.
3. Then you wait for your bus.
4. When the bus arrives, you get on the bus.
5. You buy a ticket from the driver or show your ticket to the driver.
6. When you arrive at your destination, you get off the bus.
7. Sometimes you even have to change buses at another bus stop.