Prepositions

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

Prepositions begin phrases that modify other words in the sentence. Often, they describe relationships in time or space, showing how a noun or pronoun relates to another word within a sentence.

Common Prepositions
Below is a list of common prepositions. (Note: A preposition may be more than one word.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>about</th>
<th>as</th>
<th>but</th>
<th>in addition to</th>
<th>outside</th>
<th>under</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aboard</td>
<td>at</td>
<td>by</td>
<td>inside</td>
<td>over</td>
<td>underneath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above</td>
<td>because of</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>in spite of</td>
<td>past</td>
<td>until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>according to</td>
<td>before</td>
<td>despite</td>
<td>like</td>
<td>since</td>
<td>unto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>across</td>
<td>behind</td>
<td>during</td>
<td>near</td>
<td>through</td>
<td>up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after</td>
<td>below</td>
<td>except for</td>
<td>of</td>
<td>throughout</td>
<td>upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against</td>
<td>beneath</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>till</td>
<td>with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>along with</td>
<td>beside</td>
<td>from</td>
<td>on top of</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among</td>
<td>between</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>toward</td>
<td>without</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prepositional Phrases
A preposition is most often followed by a noun or pronoun that serves as the object of the preposition. The preposition, its object, and all words that modify the object make up a prepositional phrase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositional Phrase</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Modifiers</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under my old table</td>
<td>under</td>
<td>my old</td>
<td>table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because of his horrible attitude</td>
<td>because of</td>
<td>his horrible</td>
<td>attitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Role of Prepositional Phrases
Prepositional phrases normally function as adjectives or adverbs within a sentence.

Adjectival Prepositional Phrases—As adjectives, prepositional phrases usually follow the noun or pronoun they modify and answer questions like Which one? or What kind?

**EXAMPLES:**
The girl from Canada. (Which girl? The girl from Canada. The phrase modifies girl.)
A day like today. (What kind of day? A day like today. The phrase modifies day.)

Adverbial Prepositional Phrases—As adverbs, prepositional phrases modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They answer questions such as the following: When? Where? How? Why? To what extent? Under what conditions?

**EXAMPLES:**
I slept in the barn. (The phrase modifies the verb slept. It answers the question Where?)
For you, I’ll do it! (The phrase explains under what conditions you’ll do it.)
I am tired of this show. (The phrase, of this show, modifies the adjective tired.)
Prepositions

Identifying Prepositions
The words *before, after, until, as, and since* sometimes act as prepositions and sometimes act as conjunctions.

If you find one of these words with **both a noun/pronoun and a verb** following it, the word is functioning as a conjunction. (See *Conjunctions* handout.)

**CONJUNCTIONS:**

*Before you went to school*, mom told you to eat breakfast.

*Before* is followed by both a pronoun (*you*) and a verb (*went*), making it a conjunction.

I will watch *as the doctor operates*.

*As* is followed by a noun (*the doctor*) and a verb (*operates*) making *as* a conjunction in this case.

If one of these words is followed **only by a noun/pronoun** (and words describing the noun) and no verb, it is functioning as a preposition.

**PREPOSITIONS:**

*Before school*, I always eat breakfast.

The phrase *before school* contains *before* and a noun but no verb, so *before* is a preposition.

He works *as a full-time doctor*.

The phrase *as a full-time doctor* contains *as* and a noun (*doctor*) with modifiers (*a full-time*) but no verb, so *as* must be a preposition.