

FOUNDATIONAL GRAMMAR

LESSON SEVEN: PREPOSITIONS and PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

A preposition is a word that links a noun or a pronoun to the rest of the sentence by naming the relationship between them. Think of the preposition as a relationship expert: it brings words together.

Grandma lives **in** her *apartment*.

Grandma sleeps **near** her *puppy*.

Grandma sits **beside** her *radio*.

As you can see, the preposition, which is in dark print, shows the particular relationship between the two words in italics. The words in italics are connected by the preposition. The noun after the preposition is underlined and is called the object of the preposition.

Different categories of relationship, for example:

place — **under** the bed

time — **on** Sunday

movement — **towards** the horizon

manner — **by** train

means — **with** a blunt instrument

accompaniment — **without** a job

possession — a friend **of** mine

purpose — done **for** charity

Below is a list of common prepositions. They are only prepositions, however, if they have an object to complete them. These words on their own are not prepositions.

To decide if a word is a preposition, say the preposition followed by *whom* or *what*. If a noun or a pronoun answers the question, the word is a preposition.

about	from	up	around	down
below	onto	along	concerning	like
excepting	underneath	but	instead of	through
off	after	inside	regarding	without
toward	between	over	with	before
above	in	upon	at	during
beneath	out	among	despite	near
for	until	by	into	throughout
on	against	in spite of	since	with regard to
under	beyond	past	within	behind
across	in front of	up to	because of	except
beside(s)	outside	of	to	with respect to

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun.

** Remember: A preposition must have an object. If a word is being used from the preposition list, and it doesn't have an object, it is probably an adverb telling "where?" or "when." **

Eg: I went (to the store.) – "to the store" = prepositional phrase
to = preposition
store = noun that ends the phrase/Object of the Preposition

The noun that ends the prepositional phrase is called the *object of the preposition*. There can be adjectives between the preposition and its object.

Eg: I went (to the small market.) - prepositional phrase
to = preposition
the, small = adjectives describing "market"
market = noun/ object of the preposition

Prepositional phrases are sometimes modifiers, telling which one, how, when, or where.

For example: The book **on the bathroom floor** is wet. Which book? The one on the bathroom floor.

Frank is stiff **from yesterday's workout**. How did he get stiff? From the workout.

I stopped to pick some flowers **before going home**. When did I stop? Before going home.

We had spicy chicken **at the Jade Palace**. Where did we eat spicy chicken? At the Jade Palace.

Remember, a prepositional phrase will NEVER contain the subject of the sentence.

For example: Neither **of these cookbooks** has the recipe I'm looking for. The word "cookbook" *looks* like the subject of the sentence. It is NOT. The phrase "of these cookbooks" is a prepositional phrase and cannot contain the subject of the sentence; the subject of this sentence is the pronoun "neither."

If you are asked to identify the subject of a sentence and there are prepositional phrases, first identify and cross them out before trying to identify the subject.

For example: One of my friends lives in Chicago. What is the subject of the sentence? First, cross out all of the prepositional phrases: One ~~of my friends~~ lives ~~in Chicago~~. What you have left is the simplest, most basic form of the sentence: One lives. *One* is the subject, and *lives* is the verb. Can you do the same with the sentence below?

Most of the team went on the trip. What is the subject of this sentence?

Also remember, a prepositional phrase will NEVER contain a verb. This will be important information very soon!

Prepositions vs. Adverbs

Words that are sometimes prepositions can act as adverbs. A preposition requires an object. An adverb does not. A single word acting as an adverb answers where, when, how often, how, or to what extent about the verb. Often the same exact word can operate as an adverb in one case and a preposition in the other.

For example: The children enjoy playing outside. The cherry tree grows outside my window. In the first sentence, the word *outside* acts alone, telling you where the children enjoy playing. In this case, *outside* is an adverb. In the second sentence, the word *outside* joins an object, "my window", with the rest of the sentence, telling you where the cherry tree grows. In this case, *outside* is a preposition.

Simple Sentences—Modifiers (cont.)

Prepositions are not modifiers but connecting words; they link the prepositional phrase with the rest of the sentence. However, the entire prepositional phrase governed by the preposition is considered a modifier! Prepositional phrases can act like adjectives or like adverbs, modifying

nouns or verbs. In a few rare cases, the prepositional phrase can also function as a noun, acting like the subject of a sentence! For example: On a boat is where I want to be. However, it is much more common for a prepositional phrase to describe or modify.

For example:

- The woman on a boat is my Aunt Sue.
- We will go sledding in the winter.
- I am hungry because of this diet.

In these sentences, the whole phrase *on the boat* modifies the noun *woman* because it tells you **which** woman, the whole phrase *in the winter* modifies the verb *will go sledding* because it tells you **when** the sledding will happen, and the whole phrase *because of this diet* modifies the adjective *hungry* because it tells you **why** you are hungry. Just like other modifiers, prepositional phrases give more information about the other words in the sentence. If you were to draw a basic diagram of these sentences, they would look like this: (notice that the preposition and any adjectives go on slanty lines while the nouns which are the object of the preposition go on straight lines.)

