



# PREPOSITION EXPLANATION SHEET

## All There Is to Know about Prepositions

◆ A preposition can be identified by knowing its definition or by memorizing a list.

1. Definition: A preposition is a single word (See below) or compound word (See further below) used to show the relation of a noun or pronoun in a sentence to some other word in the sentence. It shows relationships of location or direction. A preposition is most often in a phrase with other words. The phrase does the job of a single part of speech. (see “Phrases” on back)

The *house* across the *street* has been sold. (relating the house to the street)

We *flew* above the *clouds*. (relating where flying to the clouds)

The book *is* lying on the *table*. (relating where lying to the table)

The *boy* in the *back row* raised his hand. (relating boy to the back row)

2. Memorization: Learn the list of 44 commonly used single-word prepositions below. (There are lots of other lists. This is just one list.) Sometimes these words are not automatically prepositions (see “Be careful” below) \*\*\*\*Remember, they do need to be in phrases.

### A List of Common Single-Word Prepositions

<i>aboard</i>	<i>before</i>	<i>down</i>	<i>past</i>	(not passed)
<i>about</i>	<i>behind</i>	<i>during</i>	<i>since</i>	
<i>above</i>	<i>below</i>	<i>except</i>	<i>through</i>	
<i>across</i>	<i>beneath</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>till</i>	
<i>after</i>	<i>beside</i>	<i>from</i>	<i>toward</i>	
<i>against</i>	<i>between</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>to</i>	(See <u>infinitives</u> on other side.)
<i>along</i>	<i>beyond</i>	<i>into</i>	<i>under</i>	
<i>among</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>like</i>	<i>until</i>	
<i>around</i>		<i>near</i>	<i>up</i>	
<i>at</i>		<i>of</i>	<i>upon</i>	
		<i>off</i>	<i>with</i>	
		<i>on</i>	<i>within</i>	
		<i>over</i>	<i>without</i>	

\*\* **Be careful** when labeling these words. Some words in the list above can be conjunctions or verbs.

Again, remember, **these words need to be in phrases** to be called prepositions. (see back side)

1. We ate lunch after we played tennis. (conjunction joining two sentences)
2. He left the house after dinner. (preposition relating when left house and dinner)
3. Until you finish writing, you can't watch TV. (introd. conjunction joining two sent.)
4. Ted had to wait until dinner. (preposition)
5. We like to eat spaghetti. (verb)
6. He looks like his big brother. (preposition)
7. He stood near the lake. (preposition)
8. Finally we neared the house after 55 minutes of driving. (verb)

◆ Examples of compound prepositions:

<i>according to</i>	<i>by means of</i>	<i>in place of</i>	<i>on top of</i>
<i>ahead of</i>	<i>in addition to</i>	<i>instead of</i>	<i>out of</i>
<i>aside from</i>	<i>in back of</i>	<i>next to</i>	
<i>because of</i>	<i>in front of</i>	<i>on account of</i>	

The parade *passed* in front of *City Hall*. (relating passing and City Hall)

Saturn is *recognized* easily because of *its wide rings*. (relating recognized and wings)

**If you are not sure if a preposition is a compound preposition or not, try replacing it with a single-word preposition:** He sat in back of the room. / He sat in the room.

#### ◆ Prepositional **phrases**

Prepositions usually begin phrases (a group of words). This group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun is called a **prepositional phrase**. In order for a word to be used as a preposition, it really must be in a prepositional phrase. If it is not in a phrase and not being used as a conjunction or a verb (previous stated information), the word is most likely being used as an adverb.

1. He walked down the street. (preposition)
2. John was afraid to look down yesterday. (adverb)
3. He got off the horse. (preposition)
4. Ken was tired of the ride so he got off. (adverb)

#### ◆ Object of the preposition

The noun or the pronoun at the end of the phrase is given the special name **object of the preposition**. Below are some examples.

1. Jack ran down the street.
2. My sister sat on a tack.
3. The boys threw the ball at her.

#### ◆ Prepositional phrase **uses**

Prepositional phrases do the job of single-word parts of speech. They can do the job of a single adjective or the job of a single adverb. If the whole phrase is telling more information about a noun or pronoun in the sentence, then the phrase is doing the job of a single-word adjective and is called an **adjective phrase**. If the phrase is telling information about the verb (telling where something is done or going, for example), then the phrase is doing the job of a single-word adverb and is called an **adverb phrase**.

It is often easy to just look at the word immediately before the phrase. If it is a noun, then the phrase is an adjective phrase modifying that noun. If the word immediately before the phrase is adverb, then the phrase is an adverb phrase modifying that verb.

1. Fred walked down the street. (adverb phrase modifying *walked*—where walked?)
2. A boy in a blue jacket scored a goal. (adjective phrase modifying *boy*—which boy?)
3. He sat on a tack. (adverb phrase modifying *sat*—where sat?)
4. The man at the door bought a ticket. (adjective phrase modifying *man*—which man?)

#### ◆ A special circumstance: **infinitives**

When the word to comes immediately before a verb, the word to and the verb are given a special name. The two words together become a special verb form called an **infinitive**.

1. Jerry walked to the store. (preposition)
2. Linda liked to swim at night. (infinitive)
3. He travelled to Italy last summer. (preposition)
4. He liked to travel to Italy every summer. (infinitive)

#### ◆ A last **special note**

When you start identifying the different jobs that nouns can have in a sentence, this special note might become helpful: **Any noun in a prepositional phrase has one job and only one job: object of a preposition**. It has that job and none else. It can never serve in any other capacity in the sentence. Therefore, that noun could never be called the *subject* of a sentence, can never be called the *direct object* of the verb, can never be called the *indirect object* of the verb, and can never be called a *predicate noun*. For this reason, it is very helpful to be able to identify and understand the jobs of prepositions.