

Writing Centre

Preposition Use

A preposition links nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words to help locate things. The word or phrase that the preposition introduces is called the object of the preposition. All prepositional phrases end with a noun - preposition + noun is mandatory.

IN

Use "in" with months, years and periods of time:

- in December
- in 1986
- in the forties

Use "in" with lines:

- in a row
- in a straight line
- in a queue

Use "in" for a period of time in the future:

- in a few days
- in a couple of months

Use "at" with spaces:

- at the bus stop
- at the front door
- at the cinema
- at the end of the street

Use "at" with precise time:

- at six o'clock
- at 4 p.m.

-at 11:45

Use "in" with verbs and specific cities, countries, provinces, states, etc.:

- stay in Canada
- work in Toronto
- live in Hamilton

Use "in" with spaces:

- in a room
- in a building
- in a garden
- in a park

Use "in" with bodies of water:

- in the water
- in the sea
- in a river

Use "at" with places on a page:

- at the top of the page
- at the bottom of the

page

Use "at" with verbs and general places:

- at the cinema

-at school

-at home

ON

Use "on" with directions:

- on the left
- on the right

Use "on" with days of the week:

- on Monday
- on Saturdays
- straight on

Use "on" with specific calendar days

- on Valentine's Day
- on December 26th

Use "on" with surfaces:

- on the wall
- on the floor
- on the table

TO

Use "to" with action verbs:

- go to work
- drive to Toronto

WHILE

Use "while" plus a verb form:

- while I was watching TV
- while I lived in Ottawa
- come to dinner

FOR

Use "for" with a period of time to

express the duration or how long something has happened:

- for three weeks
- for many years
- for an hour

DURING

Use "during" with a noun to express

when something happens:

- during class
- during my summer vacation
- during the classroom

Important notes

In/at/on the corner

- We say "in the corner of a room", but "at the corner (or "on the corner") of a street

In/at/on the front

- We say "in the front / in the back" of a car
- We say "at the front / at the back" of the classroom
- We say "on the front / on the back" of a piece of paper

In the morning / afternoon/ evening – at night

- We say in the morning, afternoon or evening BUT we say "at night"

No prepositions are needed when:

With verbs of movement and the noun 'home' – "He went home – he drove home."

With the verb 'visit' – "She visited Edmonton last summer."

Beare, K. (2017). *Preposition Use*. Retrieved from http://esl.about.com/library/grammar/blgr_prep1.htm