# 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 **“in”** with bodies of water:

-in the water

-in the sea

-in a river

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

# AT

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 **“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

-straight on

Use **“on”** with days of the week:

-on Monday

-on Saturdays

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

-come to dinner

# WHILE

Use **“while”** plus a verb form:

-while I was watching TV

-while I lived in Ottawa

# 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 happened

-during class

-during the classroom

-during my summer vacation

# 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.”

Material taken from About.com website

[esl.about.com](http://esl.about.com/library/grammar/blgr_prep1.htm)

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