

Prepositions (time, place, means)

1. What are prepositions?

A **preposition** shows the connexion between a noun and another part of a sentence.

The boy is in the garden. > “in” shows the connexion between the boy and the garden.

If we remove the preposition: *The boy is the garden* we obtain nonsense!

Prepositions can be **static** (denoting a position in time or space) or **dynamic** (denoting a movement of some kind). Compare:

He went to work. (*dynamic*)

He was at work. (*static*)

A major part of all prepositional clauses use the following nine prepositions:

He cut his finger **with** a knife.

She waited for him **at** the bus stop.

They go to school **by** bus.

I sent a birthday card **to** my sister.

We left the dog **in** the car.

They stopped what they were doing **for** five minutes.

She got a postcard **from** someone she doesn't know.

They live **on** the outskirts **of** town.

2. Prepositions of time

We use **at** to speak of a specific **clock time**:

I'll meet you at 5 o'clock.

We use **for** to speak of a **length** of time:

I have been her for 45 minutes.

We use **in** to indicate a future moment in time:

He will be home in about an hour.

We use **by** to speak of a time limit:

You must finish this by the end of the day.

3. Prepositions of place

We use **at** to indicate a specific place:

He is working at his desk.

We use **by** to indicate the proximity of one thing in relation to another:

Your keys are on the table by the door.

We use **on** to indicate that something is atop something else:

The book you want is on the top shelf.

We use **in** to indicate the something is inside something else:

The clean towels are in the cupboard at the top of the stairs.

4. Prepositions of means

We use **with** to indicate what is used:

She ate her soup with a spoon.

We use **by** to speak of how something is accomplished:

He went to the airport by taxi.

She succeeded by working very hard.

We use **from** to indicate where something comes from:

He gets his intelligence from his father.

5. Other uses

in - a town; a country; the morning; the afternoon; the evening; a future time; a street; a month; a season.

at - a clock time; a precise place; night; a specific calendar time; the weekend.

on - a day; a date; public transport.

by - a means of transport (by car, by bus, by bicycle...); oneself (alone); near / next to