

Prepositions

When Do I Use *In*, *On*, *At* and *About*?

A quick guide to four commonly confused prepositions

One aspect of the English language that confuses many native and nonnative speakers is prepositions. The goal of this sheet is to give the reader a better understanding of four of the most commonly confused prepositions and when to use them in a sentence.

ON

I live on Pine Street.

John put the pencil on the table.

Lois was married on Sunday.

Erin saw her father on TV.

Bob read a book on knitting.



In

I live in a two-story house.

John put the pencil in a box.

Lois was married in November.

Bob read the book *Don Quixote* in English.

I paid for my car in cash.



AT

I work at home.

Kevin didn't know that water freezes at 0°C.

Mike is good at drawing.

It rains at night here.



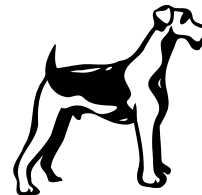
ABOUT

Matt's puppy runs about the yard all day.

The house is about 70 years old.

That car is about \$50,000.

Harold wrote a book about crop dusting.



<i>Preposition</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>Other (including idiomatic phrases)</i>
at	<i>point/intersection</i> : meet at the corner <i>target</i> : Look at John. Throw the stone at the wall. <i>general area</i> : Meet me at the theater.	We met at 1 o'clock It rains at night	Water freezes at 0°	He works at keeping in shape. She's good at dancing.
about	<i>all around</i> : He ran about the yard.	<i>approximate</i> : about 1 o'clock	<i>approximate</i> : about \$1 about 70 degrees	<i>concerning</i> : a book about mathematics
above	<i>higher than</i> : above the picture (on the wall)		above \$5 above freezing above average	above suspicion above reproach
against	<i>contact</i> : to lean against the wall	<i>conflict</i> : to work against the clock	<i>conflict</i> : two against four	<i>internal</i> : against one's will <i>external</i> : against all odds
around	<i>state</i> : The fence is around the house. <i>action</i> : The children run around the yard.	<i>approximate</i> : around 1 o'clock	<i>approximate</i> : around \$2 around 4 miles	
before	<i>in front of</i> : before the mast He stood before us.	<i>earlier than</i> : before 1960; before the accident		
below	<i>lower than</i> : below the surface		below zero below average	
between	<i>at an intermediate point in relation to two entities</i> : between the house and the street	between 1 and 2 o'clock	between 100 and 110 pounds	between you and me
by	<i>nearness</i> : chair by the desk	<i>no later than</i> : by 5 o'clock	<i>reduplication(gradual increase)</i> : little by little; inch by inch <i>degree of failure</i> : miss the target by a mile; miss the train by 3 minutes	<i>without help</i> : do by oneself
for	<i>goal</i> : set out for Alaska <i>distance</i> : for 7 miles	<i>duration</i> : for 7 years	<i>exchange</i> : buy for \$4	<i>reason</i> : California is famous for its wine. <i>goal/purpose</i> : fish for trout
from	<i>a starting point</i> : We traveled from New York to Los Angeles. <i>origin</i> : man from New York	work from 9 to 5 o'clock	From 60 to 80 degrees	<i>source</i> : paper is made from wood <i>cause</i> : wet from the rain

<i>Preposition</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>Other (includes idiomatic phrases)</i>
in	<i>enclosure</i> : the man is in the room	<i>in a period</i> : World War II ended in 1945. <i>future appointment</i> : come in 10 minutes		<i>currency</i> : Pay me in dollars. <i>language</i> : Write/say it in English
of	<i>Names of geographic locations or institutions</i> : the city of New York the state of Texas the University of California		<i>fraction, portion</i> : one of the boys	<i>possession/association</i> : a friend of mine <i>source</i> : a table made of wood
on	<i>contact</i> : on the wall <i>along</i> : on the river; I live on this street.	<i>day, date</i> : on Sunday on November 9 th		<i>communication</i> : on the radio; on TV <i>concerning</i> : a book on magic; a lecture on modern art
over	<i>state of being above (with or without contact)</i> : carry a sweater over his shoulder; the roof over our heads <i>action above</i> : jump over the fence	<i>spanning time</i> : over the weekend	<i>more than</i> : over an hour over \$2 over 0°C	<i>communication</i> : over the radio, TV
through	<i>penetrate</i> : through the window; through the forest	<i>duration</i> : through the years		<i>endurance</i> : through thick and thin
to	<i>direction</i> : go to the movies	<i>until</i> : work from 9 to 5 o'clock <i>before</i> : a quarter to eleven	He is wise to that extent. He is wise to such an extent that	<i>accompany</i> : dance to the music
toward	<i>in the direction of</i> : walk toward the wall	toward morning	The temperature moved steadily toward 0°C	toward a lasting peace
under	<i>below (state)</i> : be under the house <i>below (action)</i> : crawl under the house	<i>less than</i> : in under an hour	under \$1; Under 10 men; under 70 degrees	<i>condition</i> : under duress (stress)
with	<i>alongside, near</i> : even with the wall	<i>together</i> : He grew wise with the years. He rises with the chickens.	<i>equal standing or ability</i> : rank with the best; run with the fastest	<i>In regard to</i> : pleased with the gift <i>manner</i> : spoke with ease

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