Prepositions

What is a Preposition?

A preposition is a word which usually precedes a noun, a pronoun or a gerund. The word which follows the preposition is called the **object** of the preposition. It expresses the relationship between its object and another word or idea in the sentence.

Rachel kept the books **in** the shelf.
(The preposition 'in' expresses the spatial relationship between 'the books' and 'the shelf'.)

The bull charged **towards** the matador.
(The preposition 'towards' expresses the directional relationship between 'The bull' and 'the matador'.)

Types of Prepositions

There are five basic types of prepositions:

1. Simple prepositions
2. Compound prepositions
3. Double prepositions
4. Participial prepositions
5. Phrase prepositions

Simple Prepositions

One-word prepositions are known as **simple prepositions**.

in	on	by	to	off	till	through	of
up	out	with	from	for	down	under	over

The girl in the blue dress is smiling at me.
There is a package for you from Australia.
I want to go through the papers one last time.

Compound Prepositions

Prepositions formed out of prefixing 'a-' or 'be-' with a noun or an adjective are known as **compound prepositions.**

along	between	beneath	across	about	beside	before	amidst
above	within	without	below	around	underneath	against	among

Manish wants his family to go along with him.
Place the bolster between the two cushions.
You should consume two pills after meals.

Double Prepositions

Pairs of prepositions conveying the same idea are known as **double prepositions**.

away from	along with	apart from	from behind	up to
down on	up on	from inside	in to	outside of

You have indeed lived up to your reputation.
The child was lured away from its parents.
The seer had asked for nothing apart from some water.

Participial Prepositions

When verbs ending in –ing or –ed/–en function as prepositions, they are called **participial prepositions**.

considering	notwithstanding	assuming	given	following

Considering that he has an immaculate track record, we should give him another chance.
Assuming that the movie has not begun, we would miss the first 30 minutes even if we were to leave now.
Notwithstanding her initial dislike towards her husband, Shanti now dotes on him.

Phrase Prepositions

Phrase prepositions are formed when a group of words come together to function as a single unit.
There prepositions usually have the **Preposition** + **Noun** + **Preposition** structure.

Preposition	Noun	Preposition	Phrase Preposition
in	accordance	with	in accordance with
by	the virtue	of	by the virtue of
in	regard	to	in regard to
in	front	of	in front of

The rituals were performed in accordance with the traditions.
For the sake of argument, what if you are wrong?
The match was postponed owing to the bad weather.

Functions of Prepositions

Prepositions Indicating Place

Some prepositions indicate the **spatial** (related to space) **relationship** between the words in the sentence.

on	around	in	at	atop	amidst	inside
by	through	outside	above	under	after	down

There are strange men standing at the door.
A scar could be seen above his left brow.
Is there an honest man amidst these liars?

Prepositions Indicating Time

Some prepositions indicate the **temporal** (related to time) **relationship** between the words in a sentence.

on	from	until	during	in	at	for	since	till

They wed on the 23rd of December.
The boys sneaked out of the theatre during the interval.
The company has relied on the support of its investors since its inception.

Prepositions Indicating Destination

Some prepositions are used to indicate the direction of the nouns' movement.

towards	to	into	for	in	at	for	since	till

The ship sailed towards the east.
The assailant took a shot at the Mayor.
The thieves made for the exit.

Prepositions Indicating Origin

Prepositions are used to indicate **origin** or **source** of an action or movement of the nouns.

from	out of

Tiny saplings sprouted out of the wet earth.
Naresh's uncle has come from Ajmer.

Prepositions Indicating Motion

Some prepositions can be used to indicate the **movement** of the nouns in the sentence.

across	along	out of	away	past	through	into

The kitten sprinted across the room.
The secret was kept away from his own family.
This morning, my neighbour ran past my house screaming in fear.

Prepositions Indicating Purpose

Prepositions can be used to indicate the **utility** or **purpose** of the subject of the sentence.

for

Canoes were provided for transportation.
Dhruv had to buy books for school.

Prepositions Indicating Agent

Some prepositions indicate that something is **responsible** for an action done on the subject. The action is always expressed in the passive voice.

by	with

The refugees arrived at the new coast by sea.
The bride's face is decorated with religious motifs.
Farida's car was vandalised by hooligans.

Prepositions Indicating Contrast or Concession

Some prepositions are used to express **contrast** between two ideas in a sentence.

for	notwithstanding	with	for	despite	with

For a few exceptions, the little town is mostly crime-free.
Notwithstanding her claims, she did have a criminal background.
Despite all his wealth, he was far from content.

Prepositions Indicating Measure

Prepositions can be used to indicate **measurement**.

by	in	for

Cloth is sold by the metre.
Philip shut his eyes for thirty seconds.
They completed the lap in two minutes.

Prepositions Indicating Possession

These prepositions are used to establish **possession** of a noun by the other.

to	of

The coat belongs to the gentleman wearing the top hat.
It is the decision of the council.
The food was cooked in the honour of the guests.

General Rules for Prepositions

- A preposition is always followed by a noun, a pronoun or a gerund.

in the sky	of them	by speaking

- Although it is preferable not to end a sentence with a preposition, exceptions are possible if the sentence features a relative pronoun.

This is the hotel where we were put up at.
This is the farmer whom he sold his cattle to.

- The sentence can end in a preposition if it is in the interrogative form.

Is this what he asked for?
Where are we headed to?

- In some cases, prepositions are left without an object. They are known as stranded prepositions.

We have a lot to complain about.
There is nothing to be afraid of.

- A preposition is never followed by a verb.

Common Errors with Prepositions

Difference between ‘for’ and ‘since’

- The preposition ‘for’ indicates duration.
- The preposition ‘since’ indicates the beginning of a duration.

I have been waiting here since 10:15 AM.
I have been waiting here for two hours.

Difference between ‘among’ and ‘between’

- The preposition ‘among’ is used to refer to more than two things.
- The preposition ‘between’ is used to refer to two things.

They shared it among the three of them.
The secret is safe between the two of us.

Collocations

Adjectives

- Adjectives such as '**inferior**', '**superior**', '**junior**', '**senior**', '**prior**', '**anterior**' and '**posterior**' are followed by '**to**'.

The Pandavas were superior to the Kurus.

- The adjective '**preferable**' is also followed by the preposition '**to**'.

Death is preferable to ignominy.

- The adjective '**different**' is followed by the preposition '**from**' or '**to**'.

The tribes are different from each other when it comes to rituals.

- '**Nice**', '**kind**', '**silly**', '**clever**', '**sensible**', '**intelligent**', '**generous**', '**rude**', '**thoughtful**', '**good**' and '**reasonable**' are followed by the preposition '**of**'.

How silly of you!

- '**Nice**', '**kind**', '**polite**' and '**rude**' are followed by the preposition '**to**'.

Sharad was rude to the staff.

- '**Happy**', '**pleased**', '**satisfied**' '**disappointed**', '**bored**', '**fed up**' and '**content**' are followed by the preposition '**with**'.

I am satisfied with your work.

- '**Excited**', '**worried**', '**sad**' and '**anxious**' are followed by '**about**'.

Mother was worried about your future.

- '**Sorry about**' doing something; '**Sorry for**' something.
- '**Full**', '**short**' and '**fond**' are followed by '**of**'.

Faisal is full of gratitude for you.

Nouns

- ‘**Access**’, ‘**alternative**’, ‘**exception**’, ‘**reaction**’, ‘**confession**’, ‘**threat**’ and ‘**solution**’ are all followed by ‘**to**’.

There are no exceptions to the rule.

- ‘**Advantage**’, ‘**characteristic**’, ‘**difference**’, ‘**intention**’, ‘**notice**’, ‘**opinion**’, ‘**result**’, ‘**smell**’, ‘**use**’, ‘**taste**’, ‘**sound**’ and ‘**feel**’ are all followed by the preposition ‘**of**’.

Most people love the smell of wet earth.

- ‘**Love**’, ‘**hate**’, ‘**preference**’, ‘**need**’, ‘**reputation**’, ‘**talent’**, ‘**eye**’ and ‘**credit’** are all followed by the preposition ‘**for**’.

There is an urgent need for skilled practitioners.

Verbs

- ‘**Accuse**’, ‘**approve**’, ‘**dream**’, ‘**rid**’ and ‘**remind**’ are followed by ‘**of**’.

He was accused of high treason.

- ‘**Add**’, ‘**apologise**’, ‘**belong**’, ‘**complain**’, ‘**consent**’, ‘**explain**’, ‘**happen**’, ‘**introduce**’, ‘**invite**’, ‘**prefer**’, ‘**respond**’ and ‘**speak**’ are followed by ‘**to**’.

He apologised to his mother for his bad behavior.

- ‘**Ask**’, ‘**blame**’, ‘**excuse**’, ‘**forgive**’, ‘**keep**’, ‘**pay**’, ‘**pray**’, ‘**search**’, ‘**vote**’, ‘**vouch**’ and ‘**work**’ are followed by ‘**for**’.

Tejas was blamed for the failure of the project.

- ‘**Agree**’, ‘**comment**’, ‘**concentrate**’, ‘**depend**’ and ‘**insist**’ are followed by ‘**on**’.

I want you to comment on this painting.