

THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

at **Sam Houston**
STATE UNIVERSITY

Prepositions

A **preposition** links nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence. The word or phrase that the preposition introduces is called the **object** of the preposition.

Prepositions are idiomatic

Prepositions are difficult to understand because they do not have precise definitions. Instead, they draw much of their meaning from the noun phrase that they are attached to in a sentence. If you are ever in doubt as to the correct use of a preposition, consult a dictionary or other reference source for proper usage.

Prepositions dealing with time, space, position, and direction

Often, prepositions are used to situate objects, persons, or events in time and space.

a) His book is **in** the bedroom.

The use of the preposition “in” establishes a link between the nouns book and bedroom, specifically telling the reader where the book is located. The object of the preposition is “bedroom.”

b) The meeting is **at** six o'clock.

The use of the preposition “at” establishes a link between the meeting and six o'clock, specifically telling the reader what time the meeting will be held. The object of the preposition is the phrase “six o'clock.”

c) Common Prepositions:

about	above	across	after	against	along
along with	among	around	at	before	behind
below	beneath	beside	besides	between	beyond
by	down	during	for	from	in
inside	inside of	into	near	next to	off
on	onto	on top of	out	out of	outside
over	past	since	through	throughout	till
to	toward	towards	under	underneath	until
up	upon	within			

Prepositions dealing with comparisons, exclusions and additions:

Another way prepositions may be used to establish relationships between words is to provide comparisons, exclusions and additions. All of these words can be used as **transitional words**: they let the reader know that you are changing ideas or are changing views about an idea. For example:

Most people know smoking is dangerous to one's health. *In spite of this knowledge*, many people continue to smoke.

All students may go on the field trip, *except for those* who failed to get their permission slips signed.

Common Prepositions:

according to concerning excepting of with	as despite in addition to on account of without	as for due to in spite of regardless of	aside from except instead of regarding	because of except for like unlike
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Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases are expressions that modify the sentence in which they occur. They perform the role of an adjective or an adverb, providing context for the object, person, or event being described.

a) Mary sat *by the window*.

This prepositional phrase is performing the job of an adverb, modifying the verb "sat."

b) The car is *behind the house*.

This prepositional phrase is performing the job of an adjective, modifying the noun "car."

Prepositions and commas

If a prepositional phrase occurs at the beginning of a sentence, a comma should be placed immediately following it.

a) *According to most dentists*, you should brush your teeth after every meal.

b) *Due to our late arrival*, we will be unable to meet you for dinner.

However, when used later in a sentence, prepositional phrases typically do not need to be set off with a comma.

a) We will be unable to meet you for dinner *due to our late arrival*.

Final Note

Many professors may suggest that you refrain from ending a sentence with a preposition; this is a suggestion to the style of your writing. It is well to consider that a sentence ending with a preposition is sometimes clumsy, often weak. However, there is no grammar rule that states you can never end a sentence in a preposition.