



ENGLISH GRAMMAR (PREPOSITION)
BY: SIR WAQAR AHMED
NOA LAHORE CAMPUS



@noacss.lahore



@noacsslahoreofficial



03321125112



www.noacss.pk



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Phone (042) 352 396 22

Mobile 0332 112 5112

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Prepositions (Notes)

Time and date: At, on, by, before:

- (a) **At, on.** At a time: (*at dawn, at six, at midnight, at 4:30*). **At an age:** (at sixteen, at the age of seventeen, she got married at seventeen. **On a day/date:** (On Monday, on 4 June, on Christmas day). **Exceptions:** (at night, at Christmas) [the period, not time only]. **On the morning/afternoon/evening/night of a certain day:** we arrived on the morning of sixth. It is also possible to say: next Monday, any Monday, one Monday.
- (b) **By, before.** By a time/date/period = at that time or before. Not later than that date. It often implies: *Train starts at 6.10 so you had better be at the station by 6:00*. By + a time expression is often used with a perfect tense, particularly the future perfect. *By the end of July I will have read all those books*. **Before** can be preposition, conjunction or adverb: Before singing this (preposition), before you sign this (conjunction), I have seen him somewhere before.
- (c) **On time/in time/in good time:** **On time** = at the time arranged, not before not after: *The 8:15 train started on time*. **In time/in time for + noun** = not late. **In good time** = with a comfortable margin: *passengers should be in time for their train*. *I arrived at the concert hall in good time*.
- (d) **On arrival/on arriving.** **On** can also be used with gerund of other verbs (chiefly verbs of information): *On checking she found out that some of the people didn't know the way*.
- (e) **At the beginning/at the end/in the beginning/in the end/at first/at last.** At the beginning of the book there is often a table of contents, at the end there may be an index. **In the beginning/at first** = in the early stages (it implies that later on there was a change): *In the beginning/at first we used hand tools. Later we had machines*. **In the end/at last** = eventually/after some time. *At first he opposed the marriage, but in the end he gave his consent*.



Time: From/since/for/during:

- (a) **From, since and for.** **From** is normally used with **to** or **till/until**: Most people work from nine to five. **From** can also be used with place: where do you come from? **Since** is used for time, never for place and means 'from that time to the time referred'. *He has been here since Monday*. He wondered where Ann was, he had not seen her since their quarrel. **Since** can also be an adverb: he left school in 1983. I haven't seen him since. **Since** can also be a conjunction of time: He has worked for us ever since he left school. It is two years since I last saw Tom. I last saw Tom two years ago/ I haven't seen Tom for two years. **For** is used for the period of time: for six years, for two months, for one hour.
- (b) **During** is used with known period of time. Eid, Christmas. During the middle ages, during my holidays, during his childhood. **For** can also indicate purpose: *I went there for him*. *He comes here for learning*.



Time: to, till/until, after, afterwards:

- (a) To and till/until: To can be used with time and place, till/until with time only. We can use **from...to, from....till/until**. They worked from nine to ten/from five till ten. But if we have no **from** we use **till/until.. not to**: let's start now and work till dark. Till/until is often used with a negative verb to emphasize lateness: We didn't get home till 2.am. He usually pays me on Friday but last week he didn't pay me till the following Monday. **Till/until** is often used as a conjunction of time: We'll stay here till it stops raining. Go on till you come to the level crossing.
- (b) **After and afterwards: After** must be followed by a noun, pronoun or a gerund: don't bathe immediately after having a meal/after eating. If we do not wish to use a noun, pronoun or gerund, we cannot use **after**, but must use **afterwards = after that** or **then**: Don't have a meal and bathe immediately afterwards. They bathed and afterwards played games/played games afterwards Or they bathed and then played games. **Afterwards** can be used at either end of clause and can be modified by **soon, immediately, not long**, etc. Soon afterwards we got a letter, we got a letter not long afterwards. **After** can also be used as a conjunction: *After he had tuned the piano it sounded quite different.*

Travel and movement: From, to, at, in, by, on, into, onto, off, out, out of:

- (a) We travel **from** our starting place **to** destination: *They flew/drove/cycled/walked from Paris to Rome. When are you coming back to England?* We also send/post letters etc **to** places and people.
- (b) **Arrive at/in, get to, reach** (without preposition): We arrive **in** a town or a country, **at** or **in** a village, at any other destination: *They arrived in Spain/in Madrid. I arrived at the hotel/at the airport/at the bridge/at the crossroads. Get to* can be used with any destination and so can **reach**: *He got to the station just in time for his train. I want to get to Berlin before dark. They reached the top of the mountains before sunrise. Get in* can mean 'arrive at a destination'. It is chiefly used for trains: *What time does the train get in?* (reach the terminus/our station). **Get there, get back** are also possible.
- (c) Home: We can use a verb of motion + home without preposition: It took us an hour to **get home**. They went **home** by bus. But if home is immediately preceded by a word or phrase a preposition is necessary: She returned to her parents' home. We can be/live/stay/work etc **at home....** But in home cannot be followed directly by home: *You can do this sort of work at home or at/in your home.*
- (d) Transport: **By, on, get in/into/on/onto/off/out of**: We can travel by car (but in the/my/Tom's car), by bus/train/plane/helicopter etc and by sea/air. We can also travel by a certain route or by a certain place. We can walk or go on foot. We can cycle or go on a bicycle or by bicycle. We can ride or go on horseback. We get into public or private vehicle, or get in. we get onto/on a public vehicle. But we go on board a boat. We get on/onto a horse/camel/bicycle. We get out of a public or private vehicle or get out. We **get off** a public vehicle.
- (e) **Get in/into/out/out of can also be used with buildings, institutions and countries instead of go/come/return**. When there is some difficulty in entering or leaving. In and out here as adverbs. I have lost my keys! How are we going to get into flat/to get in? The house is on fire! We had better get out. *It's difficult to get into a university nowadays.*



Place: At, in, into, on, onto:

We can be at home, at work, at the office, at school, at an address, at a certain point, at bridge, at the bus stop. We can be in a country, a town, village, square, street, room, or which has boundaries or is enclosed. In river means you are swimming in the river. At river means beside or near the river. In is used to indicate position. Into is used to indicate movement. On is used for the position and onto indicates movement. Onto can also be used chiefly for people and animals.

Above, over, under, below, beneath, etc:

- Above and over both can mean higher than. The helicopter hovered above us/over us.
- Over can also mean covering, on the other side of, across, from one side to the another. We put a rug over him, he lives over the mountains, there is a bridge over the river. All over + noun/pronoun can mean 'in every part of' He has friends all over the world.
- Above can mean higher than. Over can mean higher than or more than.
- Over can also be used with meals, drinks, etc: we had a chat over a cup of tea. (while drinking tea.
- In combination take + time expression + over + noun/pronoun, over can mean to do/to finish: He doesn't take long over lunch/to eat his lunch. He took ages over the job.
- Below and under both can mean lower than. But under can indicate contact: She put the letter under her pillow. The ice crackled under his feet. Below is used when there is space between two surfaces. They live below us. Similarly: we live above them.
- Below and under can also mean junior in rank. He is under me (I am his immediate superior) below does not necessarily have this meaning.
- Beneath can sometimes be used instead of under but it is safer to keep it for abstract meaning. He would think it beneath him to tell a lie. (Unworthy of him). She married beneath her. (into a lower social class).



Across – Along – Through – Throughout:

- Across can be used for the position on the other side of: *The truck came towards them across the bridge. He lives across the street.*
- When we are talking about something with a flat surface or an area such as a sea or a country: *the program was broadcast across Pakistan. The figures moved rapidly across the screen.*
- When we talk about following a line of some kind (a path, a road, a river, a beach etc) we use along: *They walked along the path. I had seen them walking along the river.*
- Through is used when we emphasize that we are walking about movement in a three dimensional space, with things all around. *He pushed his way through the crowd of people to get to her. He enjoyed the peace and quiet as he walked through the forest.*
- Through can also suggest the movement from one side or end of the space to the other: *she walked through the forest to get to her grandmother's house.*
- Throughout means 'during the whole of': *We had enough firewood to keep us warm throughout the winter.*

Alternative position of prepositions:

In questions beginning with preposition + whom/which/what/whose/where:

To whom were you talking? (formal)	Who were you talking to? (informal)
In which drawer does he keep it? (formal)	Which drawer does he keep it in? (informal)

It used to be thought ungrammatical to end a sentence with preposition but it is now accepted as a colloquial form. Similarly in relative clauses a preposition placed before whom/which can be moved to the end of the clause. The relative pronoun is then often omitted:

The people with whom I was travelling (formal)	The people I was travelling with (informal)
The company from which I hire my TV set (formal)	The company I hire my TV set from (informal)



Omission of to and for before indirect objects:

I gave the book to Tom	I gave Tom the book
I showed the map to bill	I showed bill the map
They sent 5\$ to smith	They sent smith 5\$.
I'll find a job for Ann	I'll find Ann a job
I'll get a drink for you.	I'll get you a drink
I bought a book for James	I bought James a book

Promise, show, tell can be used with indirect objects only, without **to**: *promise us, show him, tell them.*

Read write can be written similarly, but require **to**: *Read to me, write to them.*

Play sing can be used with to or for: *play to us, play for us, sing to us, sing for us.*

