

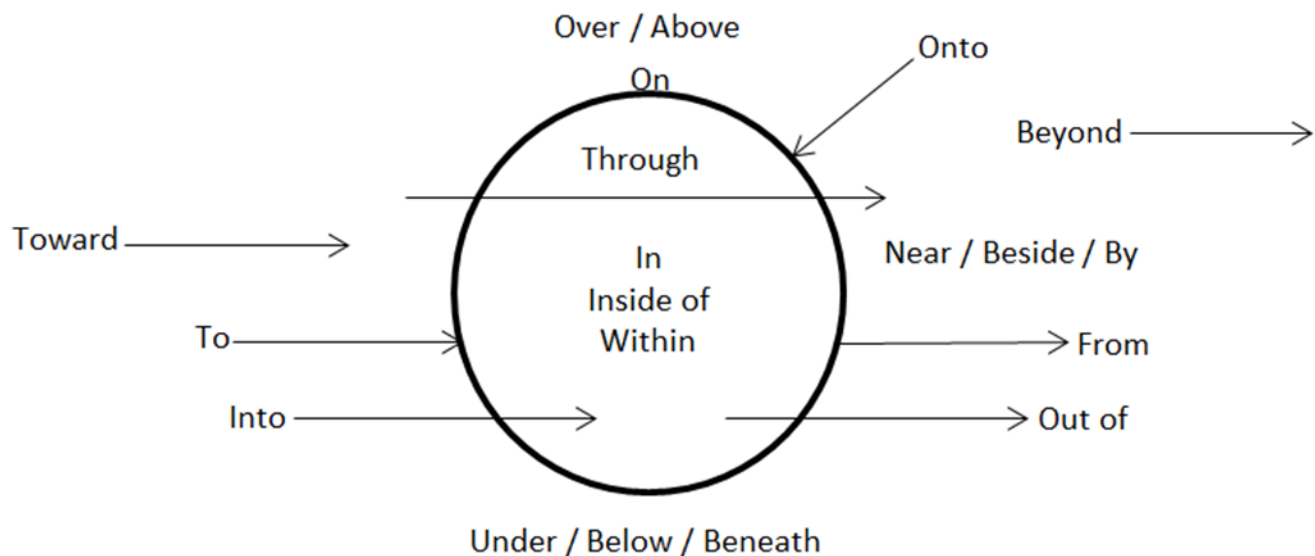
English Language Learners (ELL) Parts of Speech: Prepositions

What Prepositions Do:

Ruvinsky (2006) explains that “prepositions don’t modify words (only adjectives and adverbs do that), but in linking the words of the phrase to the rest of a sentence, prepositions show important relationships” (p. 21).

- For example, prepositions can indicate the time, position, direction, or manner of something.

Visual Representation of Prepositions



Activity A: Circle the Preposition(s) in Each Sentence (from Ruvinsky, 2006, p. 22):

1. “They will vote on the motion at this meeting.”
2. “We found your pocketbook in the house.”
3. “Flowers were planted along the path.”
4. “The author read from his new novel.”
5. “Rumors began to spread throughout the town.”
6. “He wrote a play about Canadian politicians.”
7. “The doctor walked into the room.”
8. “My cousin moved to Boston with her husband.”

Answers to Activity A:

1) On, At 2) In 3) Along 4) From 5) Throughout 6) About 7) Into 8) To, With

Deciding Which Preposition to Use When Writing

There are many instances where prepositions are needed. Here are some common categories (adapted from Coutlée et al.):

When Referring to the Location of an Object (Where?):

- On:** a surface i.e.) She is on the field.
From: starting point i.e.) The book is from the library.
In: an area/volume i.e.) She is in the classroom.
To: another location i.e.) He moved from Canada to the United States.

When Referring to an Amount of Time (When or How Long?):

- For:** The time it takes to do something i.e.) I have been studying for three hours.
Since: A specific point in time i.e.) I have been studying since noon.
During: Inside a prolonged period of time i.e.) I took three breaks during my study session.
Until: End point of a period of time i.e.) I will study until 8:00.

When Referring to Movement (Where or How?):

- Through:** from one side to the other i.e.) We travel through Hamilton on our way to Toronto.
Toward: in the direction of something i.e.) Walk toward the fence and you will find the ball.

Prepositions are Not Needed After Certain Verbs

(adapted from Perfect Your Grammar):

- Discuss:** We discussed her assignment. (**NOT:** We discussed about her assignment.)
Enter: He entered the grocery store. (**NOT:** He entered into the grocery store.)
Marry: He married his best friend. (**NOT:** He married to his best friend.)
Resemble: She resembles my mother. (**NOT:** She resembles to my mother.)
Lack: She lacks motivation. (**NOT:** She lacks of motivation.)
Approach: He cautiously approached the door. (**NOT:** He cautiously approached to the door.)

Activity B: Circle the Correct Preposition for Each Sentence:

- Bob was ____ the bus. (In / On / To / Leave Blank)
- Oscar is ____ the car. (In / On / To / Leave Blank)
- Jennifer had to choose three items ____ five. (Between / Among / Leave Blank)
- Agnes entered ____ the school. (In / To / At / On / Leave Blank)
- Lee only had to work ____ noon. (During / Until / Within / For / Leave Blank)
- Rick found a stray cat ____ his walk. (At / In / During / Within / Leave Blank)
- Marta practiced piano ____ an hour. (At / Since / For / To / Leave Blank)
- Leah married ____ her high school sweetheart. (To / At / Leave Blank)
- Carlos had to state his preference ____ two items. (Among / Between / Leave Blank)

Answers to Activity B:

1) On 2) In 3) Among 4) Leave Blank 5) Until 6) During 7) For 8) Leave Blank 9) Between

References

- Coutlée, A., Joannette, S. & Romano, A. (2013). *The grammar guide*. Montreal: Pearson.
Perfect Your English. (n.d.) Expressions without prepositions [online post]. Retrieved from <http://www.perfectyourengish.com/grammar/expressions-without-prepositions.htm>
Ruvinsky, M. (2006). *Practical grammar: A Canadian writer's resource*. New York: Oxford University Press.