

# Prepositions

Prepositions show relationships between an object and its time or space. Here's what you need to know about using English prepositions in college-level papers.

First, notice where prepositions are located in sentences. They often begin phrases at the start or end of sentences and add information in the middle of sentences.

1. In 2013, the company relocated to another region.
2. The new location near urban centers allowed the company to grow.

Then, learn to recognize and use **standard prepositions**.

|         |         |         |            |
|---------|---------|---------|------------|
| About   | Beside  | Into    | Throughout |
| Above   | Between | Near    | To         |
| Across  | Beyond  | Of      | Toward     |
| After   | By      | Off     | Under      |
| Against | Down    | On      | Until      |
| Around  | During  | Out     | Up         |
| At      | For     | Outside | Upon       |
| Before  | From    | Over    | With       |
| Behind  | In      | Since   | Without    |
| Below   | Inside  | Through |            |

*\*Find more here: [grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions).*

Know that some prepositions are part of **conventional expressions**.

|                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| According to   | In place of   |
| Because of     | In regard to  |
| By way of      | In spite of   |
| In addition to | Instead of    |
| In favor of    | On account of |
| In front of    | Out of        |

*\*Find more here: [grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions) and [english-grammar-revolution.com/list-of-prepositions.html](http://english-grammar-revolution.com/list-of-prepositions.html).*

Practice: Choose different prepositions for each example. How do different choices change the meaning? A few of the possible answers are below.

- The coaches argued \_\_\_\_\_ the game.<sup>1</sup>
- They were arguing \_\_\_\_\_ the game.<sup>2</sup>
- The game was \_\_\_\_ 4:00pm \_\_\_\_ 7:00pm.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> About, after, before, until

<sup>2</sup> About, during, over, throughout

This resource was informed by the websites listed beneath each box, *Understanding and Using English Grammar, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, by Betty Schramper Azar, and *Prepositions: A Guide to Their Handling and Safe Use*, by Professor Corey of Lake Forest College.

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- The senators argued \_\_\_\_\_ the speech.<sup>4</sup>
- Most senators were \_\_\_\_\_ passing the law.<sup>5</sup>
- They have been arguing \_\_\_\_\_ the last vote.<sup>6</sup>

Next, begin memorizing **collocations**: words that are habitually used with certain other words. Thus, when a preposition is always used with a particular noun, adjective, or verb, it is a collocation. Here are some examples:

| Noun + Preposition | Adjective + Preposition | Verb + Preposition |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Approval of        | Aware of                | Apologize for      |
| Concern for        | Capable of              | Belong to          |
| Interest in        | Familiar with           | Look forward (to)  |
| Need for           | Jealous of              | Prepare for        |
| Reason for         | Similar to              | Trust in           |
| Success in         | Worried about           | Work for           |

\*Find more here: [eslgold.com/grammar/verb\\_preposition\\_collocations.html](http://eslgold.com/grammar/verb_preposition_collocations.html), [englishpractice.com/learning/noun-preposition-combinations/](http://englishpractice.com/learning/noun-preposition-combinations/), [bedava-ingilizce.com/prepositions/adj\\_pre.htm](http://bedava-ingilizce.com/prepositions/adj_pre.htm), and [grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions).

Notice that some prepositions change within a collocation depending on the object. Here are some examples:

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Agree <i>to</i> something           | Differ <i>from</i> an unlike thing              |
| Agree <i>with</i> a person          | Differ <i>with</i> a person                     |
| Agree <i>on</i> an amount           |   |
| Agree <i>in</i> principle           | Live <i>at</i> an address (Ex. 555 N. Sheridan) |
|                                     | Live <i>in</i> a house/city                     |
| Argue <i>about</i> an issue         | Live <i>on</i> a street                         |
| Argue <i>with</i> a person          | Live <i>with</i> other people                   |
| Argue <i>for/against</i> a proposal |   |
|                                     | Qualify <i>for</i> a position                   |
| Correspond <i>to</i> something      | Qualify <i>with</i> a condition                 |
| Correspond <i>with</i> a person     |   |

\*Find more here: [englishpage.com/prepositions/verb\\_preposition.html](http://englishpage.com/prepositions/verb_preposition.html) and [grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/prepositions).

Practice: Finish these examples. How does identifying the object help you choose?

<sup>3</sup> From, to, until

<sup>4</sup> About, against, because of, for

<sup>5</sup> For, in favor of, against

<sup>6</sup> About, because of, in favor of, since

- The college prepared \_\_\_\_ graduation day.<sup>7</sup>
- The actual cost differed \_\_\_\_ the expected total.<sup>8</sup>
- Candidates who did not truly qualify \_\_\_\_ the job were jealous \_\_\_\_ her.<sup>9</sup>
- His success \_\_\_\_ class corresponded \_\_\_\_ the amount he studied.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, be prepared to think of **abstract meanings**. Yes, prepositions refer to concrete objects, but in college-level texts, these “objects” can be “concepts.”

Read these sentences from David Freedman’s “How Junk Food Can End Obesity”<sup>11</sup>:

- “*Foodlike substances*, the derisive term Pollan uses to describe processed foods, is now a solid part of the elite vernacular.” (509)
- “A central claim of the wholesome-food movement is that wholesome is healthier because it doesn’t have the artificial flavors, preservatives, other additives, or genetically modified ingredients found in industrialized food....” (517)

Are “vernacular” or “movement” physical objects? Can you hold them in your hand? “Vernacular” refers to words, and a “movement” is a large group of people thinking, planning, and hoping. Yet, we still need the preposition “of” to show the relationship between these ideas. Here are some other abstract examples:

## 1. ***In***

Physical space: His paper described the economy in Illinois.

Abstract space: He is in the field of economics.

\*You can drive a car to Illinois, but you cannot physically enter the field of economics.

## 2. ***For***

Physical purpose: The new software is for recording data.

Abstract purpose: They traded tradition for data.

\*You can quantify and produce data, but a tradition may be symbolic rituals or meditation.

## 3. ***Of***

Physical part of a whole: The employees of VentureX Inc. support the policy.

Abstract possession: The support of fellow employees helped her succeed.

\*You can shake hands with an employee, but support could be a smile, a compliment, or a feeling.

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<sup>7</sup> for

<sup>8</sup> from

<sup>9</sup> for, of

<sup>10</sup> in, to

<sup>11</sup> Freedman, David H. “How Junk Food Can End Obesity.” *They Say I Say with Readings*. Ed. Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst. 3E. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2015. 506-537. Print.

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