
PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions That Indicate Location

Location can be thought of as the *area*, *point*, or *surface* of something. Certain prepositions indicate those locations. Here are some of the most commonly used ones:

above	in back of
along	in front of
among	in the middle of
at	near
behind	next to
below	on
beside	over
between	under
in	with

Most of these prepositions make sense in the same sentence, because they all indicate location:

The boy is **at** the table.

The boy is **behind** the table.

The boy is **beside** the table.

The boy is **next to** the table.

The boy is **under** the table.

Besides the verb *to be*, which is frequently used to show location, there are several other verbs that also indicate *where* someone or something is:

Prepositions

to be found	to remain
to be located	to sit
to be situated	to stand
to lie	to stay
to live	

Of course, there are many other such verbs. Those in the preceding list are among the ones used frequently. Look at these examples:

Is Guadalajara located **in** the east or west?
The center of the earthquake was situated **near** Los Angeles.
Shells like this can be found **along** the banks of the river.
John sits **in front of** me.
The girl was lying **on** a cot and resting.
A stranger stood **next to** us.
I have to remain **at** my workbench until noon.
You can stay **with** me.
We live **between** two large houses.

As long as you know the meaning of the prepositions, you can use them with relative accuracy. But in English, just like in all other languages, certain prepositions can only be used with certain verbs or phrases. And even if two or more prepositions can be used with the same phrase, there is a change in meaning—even if it's only a slight change.

Let's look at the prepositions *at* and *in*. They are used quite commonly and have a meaning that is easy to understand. In most cases, *at* is used to show that someone or something is positioned next to a horizontal or vertical surface:

at the table	at the door
at the computer	at the window
at the desk	at the blackboard

The preposition *in* indicates that someone or something is located *inside* something:

in the car	in the city
in the house	in the box
in the garden	in the center

These two prepositions, while having very distinct uses in a sentence, are also often used with the same phrases. But when they are, the meanings are different.

Use *at* to show that someone is *at* the location of his or her occupation, preoccupation, or some activity:

at school	at the store	at the hospital
at the movies	at the library	at the factory

With certain phrases, *in* can also be used:

in school	in the store	in the hospital
in the movies	in the library	in the factory

Notice the difference in meaning between the two prepositions:

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at school = Someone is on the campus of the school, perhaps inside the building, or perhaps outside the building. This person is probably a student or teacher: “The chemistry teacher was **at school** until 7:00 P.M.”

in school = Someone is inside the school building. This person is probably a student or teacher: “The injured student was **in school** again today.”

Take note of yet another difference of meaning when the definite article *the* is added to the phrase:

at **the** school = Someone is on the campus of the school, perhaps inside the building, or perhaps outside the building. This person is *not necessarily* a student or teacher: “The landscaper was **at the school** to plant some new shrubs.”

in **the** school = Someone is inside the school building. This person is *not necessarily* a student or teacher: “My father was **in the school** for a meeting.”

There are several phrases that omit the definite article *the* when the preposition *at* is involved. Such phrases indicate that someone is *involved in the activity* described in the phrase:

He’s **at work**. = He is working.

They’re **at church**. = They’re attending a religious ceremony.

The children are **at play**. = The children are playing.

She’s **at home**. = She is staying in her house.

Tom’s **at lunch**. = Tom is eating lunch. (also used with *breakfast*, *dinner*, and *supper*)

He’s **at class**. = He is attending a class.

In general, *at* indicates that someone is involved in an activity at a location. *In* says that someone is inside that location:

The students are **at** school. (They are on campus somewhere.)

The students are **in** school. (They are in the building in their classes.)

Father is **at** the hospital. (Father is visiting. Or he may be a doctor or nurse.)

Father is **in** the hospital. (Father is a patient. Or he was outside. Now he’s inside.)

Maria is **at** the factory. (She probably works there.)

Maria is **in** the factory. (She was outside. Now she’s inside.)

Mom is **at** the store. (She is shopping there. Or perhaps she works there.)

Mom is **in** the store. (She was outside. Now she’s inside.)

Be sure to distinguish between the prepositions *among* and *between*. Use *among* to say that you are in the company of more than just two people. Use *between* to say that you are in the company of only two people:

He sat **among** the members of the tribe and told them stories.

My sister sat **between** Jim and me.

Another pair of prepositions is often used to show “by means of what transportation” a person travels. It is common to use the preposition *by* to show the concept of traveling in a conveyance: *I went by car. We travel by plane. They go by train.* But *in* and *on* are also often used to show location on the forms of transportation:

Prepositions

We were **in the car** ready to leave for vacation.
They're **on a train** somewhere in Oregon.
What **bus** were you **on**?
Haven't you ever been **on a plane** before?

exercise

13-1

Select the preposition that best completes each sentence.

1. A tiny rabbit was hiding **under/with/on** a bush.
2. Please don't sit **at/next to/over** me.
3. We saw several baby birds **at/behind/in** a nest in that tree.
4. There was nothing **below/with/among** the plane but empty space.
5. Father stays **on/above/at** the factory until 5:00 P.M.
6. An angry man stood directly **with/in the middle of/at** us.
7. John stayed **between/beside/among** me the entire time.
8. I saw Maria **in back of/above/among** the many people at the party.
9. There was a huge bug sitting **on/with/at** my bed!
10. I saw a stranger crouching **above/between/at** my car and the truck.

exercise

13-2

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase.

1. I saw a jet flying above _____.
2. Someone was hiding under _____.
3. Are you familiar with _____?
4. My sisters both work at _____.
5. The frightened kitten hid in _____.
6. Someone stood behind _____.
7. Who was sitting among _____?
8. There's nothing in front of _____.

Prepositions That Indicate Location

9. Gray clouds hovered over _____.
10. Have a seat next to _____.
11. He found his keys on _____.
12. I found a couple seats beside _____.
13. Let's set up our camp near _____.
14. We used to live between _____.
15. A puppy sat lazily in the middle of _____.

exercise

13-3

Write original sentences with the prepositional phrases given in parentheses. Use the prepositional phrase to show a location.

1. (on the train) _____
2. (at work) _____
3. (behind the dresser) _____
4. (next to her) _____
5. (in the hospital) _____
6. (with Maria) _____
7. (between them) _____
8. (over the mountains) _____
9. (in front of us) _____
10. (under a palm tree) _____

Prepositions That Indicate Movement or Direction

The prepositions in this category do not suggest where someone or something is located. Instead, they describe someone's or something's movement or direction. Below is a list of some commonly used prepositions for this concept:

along	off
at	on
by	onto
from	out of
in	to
into	toward(s)

There are two forms of this preposition: *toward* and *towards*. Both are acceptable.

Certain verbs tell you that a preposition is being used to show location: *to be*, *to be located*, *to sit*, and many more. Certain other verbs tell you that a preposition is being used to show movement or direction. Here are some important ones:

to come	to journey
to drive	to jump
to fall	to return
to fly	to run
to go	to travel
to hurry	to walk

Prepositions That Indicate Movement or Direction

Just like prepositions that show location, a variety of prepositions that show movement or direction can be used in the same sentence. The basic sentence remains the same, but the preposition alters the kind of movement or direction involved. Look at these example sentences:

The women walked **along** the river.
The women walked **from** the river.
The women walked **into** the river.
The women walked **out of** the river.
The women walked **to** the river.
The women walked **toward** the river.

You need to be aware of the difference between *to* and *toward*. The preposition *to* says that someone is going in the direction of a place and will arrive there soon:

John is going **to** the park.

The preposition *toward* means that someone is going in the direction of a place but may decide to change direction:

John is going **toward** the park. (But he may decide to turn left and go to the bank instead.)

The prepositions *in* and *on* are used to show location. But they are also used to show movement or direction. Traditionally, only *into* and *onto* are used to show movement or direction, but many people today use *in* and *on* in place of them:

She runs **into** the house.
He fell **onto** the floor.

She runs **in** the house.
He fell **on** the floor.

If you consider the phrase *She runs in the house* literally, it means that a girl is inside a house and running. But English speakers know what is meant by this sentence from the context of the conversation where that sentence was used. So in casual speech you will hear both *in* and *into* and *on* and *onto* used interchangeably.

exercise

14-1

Select the preposition that best completes each sentence.

1. The children ran **in/toward/at** the gate.
2. The young couple strolled **along/out of/into** the beach.
3. The ball rolled **off/in/at** the table.
4. Is Thomas already **at/to/in** work?
5. I was hurrying **at/to/in** my desk.
6. Someone came running **into/onto/off** the room.
7. We slowly drove **off/at/by** their house.

Prepositions

8. Ms. Brown came **from/toward/at** England last year.
9. The poor girl fell **out of/onto/by** bed.
10. I dropped the tools **into/from/off** the box.

exercise

14-2

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase.

1. The cattle were heading toward _____.
2. Someone came out of _____.
3. Why were you going into _____?
4. My family frequently travels to _____.
5. Do you come from _____?
6. The carpenter fell off _____.
7. The burglar quietly climbed onto _____.
8. Maria wants to come into _____.
9. The men were walking along _____.
10. He came at _____ with a knife.
11. She drove by _____ without stopping.
12. What time did you come home from _____?
13. We're planning on traveling to _____.
14. The cat jumped into _____.
15. The woman moved cautiously toward _____.

exercise

14-3

Write original sentences with the prepositional phrases given in parentheses. Use the prepositional phrase to show movement or direction.

1. (along the shore) _____
2. (by the school) _____

Prepositions That Indicate Movement or Direction

3. (from the yard) _____
4. (into the living room) _____
5. (onto the shelf) _____
6. (off the bed) _____
7. (out of the garage) _____
8. (to the mountains) _____
9. (toward the wall) _____
10. (into a darkened room) _____

Prepositions That Indicate Time

There are several prepositions that are used in expressions of time:

after	from
at	in
before	on
by	since
during	to
for	until

These prepositions are used with a variety of moments in time and in phrases that answer the question *when*. Some, such as *at*, *on*, *in* and *for*, have a limited use.

The preposition *at* is used primarily to point out an event in time or a time shown on a clock:

at dawn, **at** dusk, **at** daybreak, **at** holiday time, **at** lunchtime, **at** midnight, **at** the end of the day, **at** 4:30 P.M., **at** 11:55 A.M.

The soldiers finally got back **at** dawn.

On is used primarily with days of the week and dates:

on Monday, **on** Tuesday, **on** Wednesday, **on** Thursday, **on** Friday, **on** Saturday, **on** Sunday, **on** June twelfth, **on** the fifteenth of May

We're starting a new project **on** the first of the month.

Use *in* for a nonspecific time of a day, of a month, of a year, or of a season:

in the morning, **in** January, **in** 2001, **in** summer

We like going camping **in** autumn.

Use *for* with a specific event in time:

for Christmas, **for** the holidays, **for** your birthday party, **for** the celebration
I'll be there **for** your baby's christening.

Most other prepositions can be used in many varied expressions of time:

She can be here **by** five o'clock.
I want to speak with you **before** the end of the day.
He works every day **from** dawn **to** dusk.
The drought has continued **since** last June.
We spend a lot of time in Mexico **during** the winter months.
Tom won't come home **until** next year.
Maria went out to dinner **after** work yesterday.

From and *to* are usually used in the same sentence to show a long period of time. *Until* often replaces *to*:

He worked here **from** 1997 **to** 2002.
She'll be in Europe **from** June **until** August.

exercise

15-1

Select the preposition that best completes each sentence.

1. They left the theater **on/before/until** the end of the film.
2. I should be home **during/for/by** ten o'clock.
3. She only works **from/at/for** nine to three.
4. We always have a picnic **on/in/to** the Fourth of July.
5. Do you always eat lunch **for/since/at** noon?
6. Bill has been sad **for/since/at** his fortieth birthday.
7. Aunt Jane came to town **in/on/for** Carmen's big party.
8. We do a lot of shopping **during/on/by** the holiday season.
9. It's coldest here from December **to/at/on** February.
10. I'm afraid that we'll have to wait **to/until/since** tomorrow.

Prepositions

exercise

15-2

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase that expresses time.

1. The children were very noisy during _____.
2. We can expect Jim here for _____.
3. It's very rainy from May to _____.
4. I haven't seen you since _____.
5. Can you stay with me until _____?
6. Tom works hard _____ morning to night.
7. They wanted to leave work before _____.
8. The doctor gave him a checkup after _____.
9. Try to get here by _____.
10. His family usually stays at the lake in _____.
11. The twins were born on _____.
12. Dark shadows covered the ground at _____.
13. They were living in Europe during _____.
14. He's had a job in the city since _____.
15. They want to start the marathon by _____.

exercise

15-3

Write original sentences with the prepositional phrases given in parentheses.

1. (from noon until midnight) _____
2. (by June) _____
3. (since the end of winter) _____
4. (in spring) _____
5. (on May tenth) _____

Prepositions That Indicate Time

6. (after 11:00 P.M.) _____
7. (before next year) _____
8. (during his lifetime) _____
9. (after dark) _____
10. (at sunset) _____

Compound Prepositions

When two or more words are strung together and end with *to*, *of*, or sometimes *from*, they are called *compound prepositions*. They function like all other prepositions. The only difference is that they are composed of more than a single word. Here is a list of the compound prepositions:

according to	in reference to
ahead of	in regard to
apart from	in spite of
because of	instead of
by means of	on account of
by way of	out of
in back of	up to
in front of	with respect to

Look at their use in a sentence and at the meaning that is derived:

Use in a Sentence	Meaning
According to Jim, the plan is perfect.	Jim's opinion
The project was completed ahead of schedule.	before expected, earlier than scheduled
Apart from a few complaints, everyone was satisfied.	except for a few complaints
Work stopped because of the storm.	the cause was the storm
The problem was solved by means of a complex formula.	by using a complex formula
Take a look at these examples by way of a contrast.	as a contrast
A stranger stood in front of me.	before me
No one was in back of us.	behind us

I gave this response **in regard to** his letter.
 We pointed out the law that is **in reference to** this crime.
In spite of the blizzard, we drove all the way home.
Instead of a long dress, she chose a short one.
 He stayed in bed **on account of** his cold.
 The girl suddenly ran **out of** the room.
 The little boy stepped **up to** the microphone.
With respect to all these losses, I have a few
 harsh words to say.

concerning his letter
 concerning this crime
 not caring about the blizzard
 not choosing a long dress
 the cause was his cold
 from inside the room
 approached the microphone
 concerning all these losses

exercise

16-1

Select the preposition that best completes each sentence.

1. Some men stood **in front of/instead of/up to** the store.
2. **Out of/By means of/According to** the forecast, it's going to rain today.
3. **By way of/Ahead of/In reference to** his remark, I just said, "Shame."
4. We stayed home **because of/out of/in regard to** the power outage.
5. Do you still live **with respect to/in back of/by way of** the shop?
6. There **ahead of/because of/on account of** us stood a large bison.
7. He quickly drove **by means of/out of/apart from** the driveway.
8. I was too nervous to walk **up to/in regard to/by way of** the president.
9. It happened **instead of/by means of/on account of** your carelessness!
10. She can't comment **in regard to/according to/up to** that matter.

exercise

16-2

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase.

1. Please write a report in reference to _____.
2. In spite of _____, she continued to love him.
3. In regard to _____, I have a statement to make.
4. I bought a compact car instead of _____.
5. Who's waiting in front of _____?
6. The man was arrested on account of _____.

Prepositions

7. There were several tables and chairs in back of _____.
8. A strange smell came out of _____.
9. I sent her some flowers by way of _____.
10. A baby rabbit hopped up to _____.
11. You can get to the top of the mountain by means of _____.
12. With respect to _____, some changes have to be made.
13. Apart from _____, everyone else will be fired.
14. According to _____, we're in a heat wave.
15. I could see a winding road ahead of _____.

exercise

16-3

Write original sentences with the prepositional phrases given in parentheses.

1. (ahead of time) _____
2. (because of an illness) _____
3. (in front of the factory) _____
4. (in reference to your last report) _____
5. (instead of a check) _____
6. (out of the clouds) _____
7. (with respect to his last wishes) _____
8. (according to the almanac) _____
9. (apart from a few friends) _____
10. (by means of the subway) _____
11. (in back of the garage) _____
12. (in spite of the darkness) _____
13. (on account of his riches) _____
14. (up to the river) _____
15. (in regard to these lies) _____

Prepositions That Combine with Other Words

Adverbs modify verbs and answer the questions *where*, *when*, and *how* of the action of the verb:

The sick girl remained **upstairs**. → Where did the sick girl remain?

The books arrived **today**. → When did the books arrive?

Bill ran **slowly**. → How did Bill run?

Often prepositions combine with another word to form a commonly used adverb. Prepositions in this form are frequently used as prefixes. Look at these examples:

Adverb	Meaning
by and by	soon
by and large	mostly, generally
downstairs	one floor below
indoors	in a building
inside	in the interior
outdoors	in the open air
outside	in the out-of-doors
underwater	beneath the surface of the water
up-country	toward the interior of the land
uphill	going up an incline
upstairs	one floor above
uptown	toward the center of the town

Prepositions

Sometimes the combination of a preposition and another word forms a noun:

Noun	Meaning
bylaw	an organization's rule
bypass	a detour
downfall	collapse, ruin
infield	the inner playing area in baseball
insight	understanding
outbreak	sudden or violent appearance
outgrowth	something that grows out of something else
outline	a preliminary or general plan
outlook	view, foresight
underarm	the area under the arm beneath the shoulder
underclassman	a freshman or sophomore in a school
underwear	garments worn under the clothes
upheaval	something rising up suddenly or violently
uproar	violent noise, tumult

At other times the combination of a preposition and another word results in a verb:

Verb	Meaning
install	establish or place in position
intone	recite in a monotone, give inflection
outdo	exceed, surpass
outline	draw the border, sketch
outlive	live longer than someone else
undergo	bear up under stress and survive
upgrade	raise to a higher level
uphold	raise, support, encourage
upset	overturn or disquiet someone

Adjectives are also formed in this way:

Adjective	Meaning
bygone	from a past time
down-and-out	poor or hopeless
downcast	looking downward or in low spirits
downhearted	discouraged, dejected
ingrown	having grown into the flesh
inland	land away from the sea
together	with each other, jointly
underage	not of legal age
undercover	secret, engaged in spying
upstanding	respectable, honest
up-to-date	modern, fashionable

The four preceding lists are only a small sampling of the many words that are derived from a preposition combining with another word. When you encounter such words, it is sometimes possible to analyze the meaning of the preposition and the meaning of the word with which it has been combined in order to determine the meaning of the new word. Consider these examples:

(**up** = rising upward + **grade** = level) = **to upgrade** (to raise to a higher level)
(**down** = going downward + **fall** = stumble) = **downfall** (collapse, ruin)

Prepositions That Combine with Other Words

Keeping this in mind, you can sometimes guess the meaning of new words that are formed when a preposition is used as a prefix.

exercise

17-1

Select the word that best completes each sentence.

1. The strange woman was an **undercover**/**downstairs**/**upheaval** agent.
2. The newly elected governor is a(n) **bygone**/**ingrown**/**upstanding** person.
3. She **underwent**/**upset**/**intoned** her voice with the anger she felt.
4. They decided to go **by and large**/**uptown**/**uphill** for dinner.
5. Did you follow our club's **insight**/**bylaws**/**outlook**?
6. Her views just aren't **up-to-date**/**underage**/**down-and-out**.
7. The hikers followed the creek **downstairs**/**up-country**/**by and by**.
8. The old man didn't want to **outline**/**outlive**/**outlook** his wife.
9. My aunt **underwent**/**installed**/**upheld** a serious operation last year.
10. His look was **upstanding**/**bygone**/**downcast** and his face quite sad.

exercise

17-2

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase.

1. The new members refused to follow the bylaws _____.
2. Out in the street there was an uproar over _____.
3. While swimming underwater, he saw _____.
4. They were flying coach class but wanted to upgrade _____.
5. An underage girl came into _____.
6. The brothers were always trying to outdo _____.
7. The road uphill was _____.
8. There was a sudden outbreak of _____.
9. You need a technician to install _____.

Prepositions

10. The downhearted young man began to _____.
11. The couple lives downstairs from _____.
12. The underclassmen in _____ behaved badly.
13. I didn't mean to upset _____.
14. The undercover agent hid _____.
15. Within hours there was a total downfall of _____.

exercise

17-3

Write original sentences with the words or phrases given in parentheses.

1. (outdoors) _____
2. (to a bypass) _____
3. (intone) _____
4. (ingrown toenail) _____
5. (by and large) _____
6. (insight) _____
7. (his underarms) _____
8. (underwear) _____
9. (outline) _____
10. (uphold the law) _____
11. (inland) _____
12. (uptown) _____
13. (upheaval) _____
14. (undergo) _____
15. (upstanding person) _____

Participial Prepositions

This is a small category of prepositions but one that has some important uses. The present participial form of certain verbs, *although not true prepositions*, sometimes *have the characteristic of a preposition* and are used as one. Present participles are formed by adding *-ing* to the verb: *go* → *going*, *sing* → *singing*, *buy* → *buying*, etc.

Only certain present participles can act as prepositions:

concerning	following
considering	regarding
excluding	

Their use as a preposition is different from their use as a verb form. Take careful note of the differences:

This is **concerning** to me. = participle used as an adjective

He often wrote me **concerning** this problem. = preposition (about this problem)

The club was **considering** buying new equipment. = present participle

The group spent hours **considering** this issue. = preposition (on this issue)

Why are you **excluding** our old friends? = present participle

We shall meet every Tuesday **excluding** the first Tuesday in May. = preposition (except the first Tuesday in May)

An old woman was **following** us. = present participle

The show will go on **following** one more rehearsal. = preposition (after one more rehearsal)

Do you have details **regarding** this case? = participle used as an adjective

She finally spoke up **regarding** her son's behavior. = preposition (about her son's behavior)

Prepositions

exercise

18-1

Rewrite each sentence changing the italicized preposition to a participial preposition.

1. We'll need to put in a lot of time *on* this problem.

2. I had a lot to tell *about* the crimes he had committed.

3. I wanted to speak to her *about* our future together.

4. Maria passed every test *except* the one in math.

5. The picnic will go on as planned *after* the rainstorm.

exercise

18-2

Write two original sentences with the words in parentheses. One should contain a present participle; the other should contain a present participle used as a preposition.

1. (concerning)

2. (considering)

3. (excluding)

4. (following)

Postpositive Prepositions

This is another very small category of prepositions. They are derived from the shortened form of the preposition *toward*, which is *-ward*. *Postpositive* means that the prepositional form *-ward* occurs as a suffix. Notice how often another preposition acts as the prefix (*up, down, in, out*). Look at these examples:

backward	landward
downward	leeward
forward	outward
heavenward	seaward
homeward	upward
inward	windward

The points on a compass can also be combined with this suffix: *westward, eastward, northward, southward, southeastward*.

In each case, the word is adjectival or adverbial and means *in the direction of*. For example:

heavenward = in the direction of heaven

homeward = in the direction of home

seaward = in the direction of the sea

Two words that may be unfamiliar to you are *leeward* and *windward*. They do not conform precisely to the general meaning of this category of words. *Leeward* means *the direction in which the wind is blowing*. *Windward* means *the direction from which the wind is coming*.

Here are some sample sentences with each of these new words:

He walked **backward** without tripping.

When he looked **downward**, he saw a valley.

Tom moved **forward** a little in the crowded bus.

The balloons slowly rose **heavenward**.

Prepositions

Tomorrow I'm **homeward** bound!
You have to look **inward** to understand yourself.
The little boat drifted **landward**.
We sailed **leeward** into the sunset.
His **outward** appearance is good, but he's a nasty man.
Our ship moved **seaward** out of the little harbor.
When I looked **upward**, I saw the streaks of pink in the sky.
A steamer can travel **windward** with ease.
The troops marched **westward** toward the front lines.

exercise

19-1

Write two original sentences with the words in parentheses.

1. (backward)

2. (downward)

3. (homeward)

4. (inward)

5. (upward)

6. (windward)

7. (eastward)

Words That Require a Specific Preposition

Prepositions have a precise use. They cannot be used randomly but rather serve a particular function. As already discussed, some show a location. Others indicate a movement or a direction. In fact, there are some words and phrases that require a specific preposition in order to achieve the proper meaning. For example, you have to use the preposition *in* with the words *interested* or *interest*. Other prepositions make no sense:

CORRECT: I'm very interested **in** computer technology.

INCORRECT: Have you always been interested **about** classical music?

CORRECT: She shows no interest **in** such things.

INCORRECT: Tom has a great deal of interest **of** sports.

The same is true with many other words, most of which appear in verb phrases. Here is a list of commonly used expressions that require a specific preposition:

to ask for	to long for
to be alarmed by	to look after
to be capable of	to look at
to be generous with	to look for
to be interested in/interest in	to look forward to
to be sure of	to plead for/plea for
to beg for	to rely (up)on
to belong to	to speak about/of
to care about	to think about/of
to care for	to wait for

Prepositions

to depend (up)on
to dream about/of
to forget about
to hope for
to listen to

to walk up to
to watch over
to wish for
to worry about
most passive structures + by

Several phrases use the preposition *for* to complete their meaning. Whatever follows the preposition becomes the object of the preposition and forms a prepositional phrase. Look at the examples that follow:

Juan *asked for* a second helping of potatoes. (ask for = request)
The dog *begged for* a treat.
Maria *is caring for* her sick mother. (care for = tend to)
Jim really *cares for* Barbara. (care for = feel affection)
The crowd *was hoping for* a win, but the team lost.
Their family *longed for* a vacation in Europe.
They spent hours *looking for* the lost kitten.
She *pleaded with* the judge *for* mercy.
The lawyer made a brilliant *plea for* justice in this case.
How long do we have *to wait for* a bus?
The little boy *wished for* a new bicycle.

There are many phrases that begin with *to be*. They usually include an adjective or a participle, and each one requires the use of a specific preposition:

The woman *was* suddenly *alarmed by* the threat of a storm.
I didn't think you *were capable of* such a terrible thing.
Mr. Garcia *is* always so *generous with* his time.
She's not *interested in* old movies.
I'm developing an *interest in* science.
How can you *be sure of* what to do next?

Phrases that require *to*:

That red car *belongs to* me. (belongs to = ownership)
Tom wants *to belong to* our sports club. (belong to = membership)
I *listened to* the speaker's remarks with great interest.
Everyone *is looking forward to* the start of vacation.
A beautiful woman *walked up to* me and shook my hand.

Phrases that require *about*:

My brother *cares a lot about* his girlfriend.
Last night I *dreamt about* our trip to Alaska.
She says she'll never *forget about* me.
You shouldn't *speak about* such things!
It seems I'm always *thinking about* food.
My parents still *worry about* my sister and me.

Phrases that require *on* or *upon*:

You can always *depend (up)on* us.
There's no one here that I can *rely (up)on*.

Words That Require a Specific Preposition

Phrases that require *of*. Notice that these phrases are often the same ones that use *about*:

The dog seemed to be *dreaming of* chasing a rabbit.
Someone *was speaking of* the new boss's bad temper.
Guess what I'm *thinking of*.

The verb *to look* forms two new expressions with the prepositions *after* (meaning "to care for") and *at*:

The men stayed home *to look after* the children.
They *were looking upward at* the stars in the sky.

When the verb *watch* is combined with the preposition *over*, it means "to tend to" and "to protect":

The shepherd *watched over* the nervous flock of sheep.

When an active sentence is changed to a passive sentence, the subject of the active sentence becomes the object of the preposition *by* in the passive sentence:

Active: A thief stole the wallet.
Passive: The wallet was stolen **by** the thief.

Here are a few more examples of sentences in the passive voice:

Active: A raging fire destroyed the house.
Passive: The house *was destroyed by* a raging fire.

Active: The proud father tucks the little girl into bed.
Passive: The little girl *is tucked into bed by* the proud father.

Active: The chief of police himself had warned them.
Passive: They *had been warned by* the chief of police himself.

Active: Will a new chef prepare dinner?
Passive: Will dinner *be prepared by* a new chef?

exercise

20-1

Select the word that best completes each sentence.

1. I began to beg my father **of/about/for** more money.
2. She was being followed **by/to/for** a strange man.
3. Juanita also **depends/belongs/wishes** to our club now.
4. Don't you want to **watch/ask/care** for a little help?
5. I never stop worrying **for/of/about** my daughter.
6. I really care **by/at/for** her. I'm in love.
7. Tom has absolutely no interest **at/in/to** jazz.

Prepositions

8. It's difficult for them to forget **of/(up)on/about** the war.
9. I know I can **rely/hope/plead** on your honesty.
10. I **long/walk/dream** for a good night's sleep.
11. She was deeply hurt **to/over/by** his insults.
12. The child is hardly capable **of/for/(up)on** hurting anyone.
13. I'll **worry/wait/plead** for you in front of the theater.
14. You shouldn't be so generous **with/for/at** us.
15. Are you looking forward **for/at/to** the party?

exercise

20-2

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase.

1. He became alarmed by _____.
2. You shouldn't worry about _____.
3. These women are very interested in _____.
4. I'm going to wish for _____.
5. Are you absolutely sure of _____?
6. The immigration officer walked up to _____.
7. Does this jacket belong to _____?
8. You're always thinking about _____.
9. How can I depend on _____?
10. The wounded soldier was pleading for _____.
11. Never forget about _____.
12. The barn was blown down by _____.
13. We need a guard to watch over _____.
14. You should listen to _____.
15. A large animal was looking at _____.

exercise

20-3

Fill in the blank with the appropriate phrase. Choose from the phrases in this unit that require a specific preposition. Write all your sentences in the past tense.

EXAMPLE: My uncle *was interested in* American history.

1. The young man _____ me with a gift in his hand.
2. The orator _____ the importance of saving money.
3. I think this umbrella _____ to Aunt Norma.
4. I _____ the exam! I'm going to fail for sure!
5. If you needed anything, you always _____ me.
6. A police officer _____ the injured pedestrian.
7. Where were you? I _____ you for two hours!
8. Dad _____ me, but I knew how to take care of myself.
9. The boys _____ the missing child for several hours.
10. Jim _____ an extra ten dollars but got nothing.

exercise

20-4

Write original sentences with the phrases given in parentheses.

1. (to be capable of) _____
2. (to look for) _____
3. (a passive structure + by) _____
4. (no interest in) _____
5. (to wish for) _____
6. (a plea for) _____
7. (to be sure of) _____
8. (to rely upon) _____
9. (to beg for) _____
10. (to look forward to) _____

Prepositions

11. (to care about) _____
12. (to hope for) _____
13. (to look after) _____
14. (to dream of) _____
15. (a passive structure + by) _____

Prepositions and Phrasal Verbs

This is a very large category of verbal expressions that use prepositions to change the meaning of a verb. It is different from the ordinary combination of a verb and a preposition because the verb-plus-preposition phrase as a whole acquires a completely new meaning and one that is often radically different from the original meaning of the verb.

Here are a few sentences with the verb *to come* used with its regular meaning. Each one has a prepositional phrase in it, but the meaning of *to come* is not changed:

These young people **come from** Spain.

He **came into** the room and sat down.

Come with me, please.

Now look at these sentences with *to come* and a preposition. The meaning of the verb *to come* is changed:

The man **came to** after a few minutes. (He regained consciousness.)

Tom finally **came around** and signed the contract. (He changed his mind.)

How did you **come up with** this idea? (How did you create this idea?)

Verbs that change their meaning when combined with one or more prepositions are called *phrasal verbs*. They are numerous in English and are an important element of grammar. It is essential to identify them and to be able to understand the new meanings that are derived by their formation. Let's look at some important phrasal verbs.

Prepositions

Ask

The regular verb *to ask* means “to pose a question” or “to make a request.” That meaning is altered when the verb is combined with certain prepositions. In phrasal verbs those prepositions are sometimes called *particles*. You will notice that the particle-prepositions are often used as adverbs.

The phrasal verb *to ask around* means “to seek information from a variety of sources.” The particle *about* is sometimes used in place of *around*:

I **asked around** about the new girl and learned she was from Poland.

Ask around and you’ll learn where you can rent a cheap apartment.

Ask about and you’ll discover where there’s a nice place to eat.

The phrasal verb *to ask out* has changed its meaning again. It now means “to invite someone to go somewhere” or “to invite on a date.” It suggests that someone is romantically interested in another person:

John **asked** Maria **out**, but she refused.

I was too shy **to ask** her **out**.

The handsome man was **asked out** by his friend’s cousin.

Be

You are already familiar with the verb *to be*. It shows the existence of someone or something (*They are here.*) or helps to describe a condition or quality (*I am old.*). It is an irregular verb and is the only English verb that has a complex conjugation in the present and past tenses:

Present		Past	
I am	we are	I was	we were
you are	you are	you were	you were
he, she, it is	they are	he, she, it was	they were

Its participle is *been*: *I have been, you have been, he has been*, and so on.

The verb *to be* is also used as an auxiliary with a present participle to show a continuing action:

I am singing.

You were writing.

They have been studying.

Tom will be working.

But the meaning of the verb is altered when it is used in certain phrases. Let’s look at some examples of phrasal verbs formed from this verb.

The verb *to be in* has a very specific meaning. It says that someone is at home or available at the office:

I’m in for the night.

Is Dr. Jones **in** this afternoon?

Tell my client that I won’t **be in** until eight in the morning.

The opposite of *to be in* is *to be out*. It says that someone is not at home or not available at the office:

John **is out** and won't be home until late.

I believe Dr. Jones **is out** for the day. He'll be in the office at 8:00 A.M. tomorrow.

In the phrasal verb *to be on*, only the preposition *on* has been added, but the meaning is completely changed by it. This verb means that some apparatus, machinery, or equipment is functioning. It is the opposite of *to be off*:

Press the green button, and the machine **is on**. Press the red button, and the machine **is off**.

It's hot in here. **Is** the air conditioning **on**?

The engine is so quiet that I can't tell if it **is on**.

Use *to be out of sight* to say that you can no longer see someone or something or that someone or something is no longer in your range of vision:

He ran up the hill and **was soon out of sight**.

In a couple more minutes the ship **will be out of sight**.

The rocket **was out of sight** in just a matter of seconds.

The verb *to be with it* has two specific meanings. One describes a person who is very contemporary and in fashion. The other suggests that a person is in a good state of mind and is thinking properly:

Mary has another new dress. She **is** always so **with it**.

Your hairdo is old fashioned. Why can't you **be** more **with it**?

John drank a lot last night and **isn't with it** today.

I forget everything. **I'm** just not **with it** anymore.

Use *to be onto something* to say that someone is discovering something important or has an important idea. It also suggests that someone has found a clue that will help to solve a problem:

What a great invention! **You're** really **onto something**!

I read her article about stopping pollution. I think **she's onto something**.

Look at the map I found. **We're** finally **onto something** that will help to find the treasure.

The verb *to be up to something* says that someone looks suspicious and has some kind of evil intentions. It is sometimes stated as *to be up to no good*:

What's that man doing? I think **he's up to something**.

I knew you **were up to something** when I saw you holding a shovel.

Her children **are** always **up to no good**.

exercise

21-1

Select the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

1. It's cold. The heat **ask/on/is** probably off.
2. If you ask **around/with/out**, you'll get his address.

Prepositions

3. The old woman was **up to/onto/about** something again.
4. She was too timid to **be/ask/out of** Juan out.
5. The scientist knew she was **onto/out of/up** something.
6. My lawyer won't be **off/out of sight/in** until noon.
7. Your parents are so up-to-date and **onto something/with it/around**.
8. Why was the TV **on/out/up to something** all night?
9. The detective believed she was up **with it/to no good/and around**.
10. He wants to take a shower but the water is **on/onto/off** again.

exercise

21-2

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase taken from the phrasal verbs formed from ask and be.

1. I wanted to know who he was and _____ about him.
2. The jumbo jet was quickly _____.
3. The burglar was obviously _____ no good.
4. What time will Professor Gomez _____ in?
5. Did your nephew _____ my niece out?
6. Having found a clue, they knew they were _____.
7. If the fan _____, why is it so hot in here?
8. When he turned to look, her train was already out _____.
9. Use makeup! Color your hair! Try to be _____!
10. The dentist is _____ for the day.

Come

You're already familiar with this verb of motion that means "to approach, to move toward, or to arrive." Its conjugation is irregular and has these principal parts:

	Present	Past	Present Perfect	Future
you	come	came	have come	will come
he, she, it	comes	came	has come	will come

Four distinct meanings are derived from the phrasal verb *to come through* (*for*) (*with*): (1) to endure or survive, (2) to be approved by some official body or institution, (3) to perform a helpful service for someone, and (4) to produce something that has been promised. Check these examples:

- Somehow they **came through** the storm without a scratch.
- Your loan **came through** and you'll receive a check in the mail.
- Mom always **came through for** me whenever I had a problem.
- Tom will never **come through with** the money he promised.

With the particle *to*, *come to* has a simple new meaning: to become conscious again or to wake up:

- Her eyes opened and she slowly **came to**.
- The old man fell asleep and never **came to** again.

The verb *to come up with* means “to find someone or something that someone needs.” Look at these examples:

- I'll try **to come up with** a piano player for your party.
- She **came up with** another good idea.

The phrasal verb *to come upon* means “to happen upon someone or something.” The particle *on* is sometimes used in place of *upon*:

- When she **comes on** her brother, she'll have the shock of her life.
- I **came upon** an interesting book in the library.

Get

This complicated verb has two basic meanings: “to receive” and “to become.” But it is used in many other phrases and its meaning is altered each time. It's irregular and has these principal parts:

	Present	Past	Present Perfect	Future
you	get	got	have gotten	will get
he, she, it	gets	got	has gotten	will get

In this form, *to get back* (*at*) has two new meanings: (1) to return from someplace, and (2) using the preposition *at*, to seek revenge upon a person or group. Look at these examples:

- When did you **get back** from Mexico?
- He said he'd **get back at** you for lying about him.
- The terrorist wanted **to get back at** the government.

To get behind (*in*) has two meanings: (1) to promote or support someone or some activity, and (2) using the preposition *in*, to be late or lagging behind in performing a task. Here are some examples:

- You have **to get behind** your candidate, if you want him to win the election.
- I'm **getting behind in** my work again.
- If you **get behind in** your exercising, you'll put on weight again.

Prepositions

To get in on means “to participate in an event or to receive a share in something because of that participation.” Some examples:

You’ll need an invitation, if you want **to get in on** the conference.

I **got in on** the deal to sell farming equipment in Canada.

The phrase *to get into it* doesn’t reveal what it means by the makeup of the words. Its new meaning is “to have an argument or a fight.” Look at these examples:

John **got into it** with another driver over a parking space.

My parents always **get into it** over money.

In this form the phrasal verb *to get off* has two meanings: (1) often using the preposition *of*, to depart from your job, and (2) to have a person cleared of criminal wrongdoing. Some examples:

I **got off** early and came straight home.

What time will you **get off of** work tomorrow?

The clever lawyer **got** the burglar **off** with a small fine.

I’m innocent! You have **to get me off!**

Phrasal Verbs as Participles

The phrasal verbs *to get back*, *to get into*, and *to get off* can act as the participle in a passive voice sentence:

Her jewelry was never **gotten back**.

The room was **gotten into** by a clever thief.

The crook was **gotten off** by a shrewd lawyer.

With the particle *on*, *to get on (with)* has three meanings: (1) to cooperate and thrive with somebody, (2) often with the phrase *in years* it means to grow old, and (3) using the preposition *with*, to continue with something. Some examples:

The two former enemies seemed **to be getting on** without a problem.

My grandparents **are getting on in years**.

The crisis is over. Now we have **to get on with** our lives.

exercise

21-3

Select the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

1. Jim came through **with/for/up** me again.
2. Let’s get on **to/with/back to** the meeting.
3. The drowsy woman came **to/onto/up with** very slowly.

4. The children came **upon/off/at** a little cottage in the woods.
5. I work all afternoon. I get **back at/into it/off at** 5:00 P.M.
6. Ms. Brown **came up/comes to/has come upon** with a wonderful slogan.
7. Hurry! You're **getting/got/coming** behind in your work.
8. How can I get **behind in/on with/in on** this deal?
9. The two boys got **back at/into it/up with** after school.
10. She got **back at/up with/on with** us for gossiping.

exercise	21-4
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Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase taken from the phrasal verbs formed from come and get.

1. Start the music. Let's get _____ the show.
2. I don't want to stay in jail! Please _____ me off!
3. Mr. Brown finally _____ with our loan.
4. They were arguing over the accident and soon _____ it.
5. Maybe she'll come _____ if you give her some water.
6. Jim _____ an old magazine in the attic.
7. Did Maria get _____ the stock purchase?
8. We all _____ Ms. Brown, and she won the election.
9. The car dealer eventually came through _____ us.
10. I _____ at six. You can pick me up then.

Keep

This is an irregular verb that means "to retain, maintain, or cause to continue." Look at its principal parts:

	Present	Past	Present Perfect	Future
you	keep	kept	have kept	will keep
he, she, it	keeps	kept	has kept	will keep

Prepositions

Followed by a present participle, *to keep on (with)* means “to continue doing something.” Using the preposition *with* followed by a noun or pronoun, it also means “to continue doing something.” Look at these examples:

The professor told the students **to keep on** studying.
The professor told the students **to keep on with** their studies.

To keep out (of) has three meanings: (1) to stay outside a place, (2) to remain neutral about something as in “minding one’s own business,” and (3) to stop someone from entering a place:

Keep out! This means you!
I want you **to keep out of** my office when I’m working.
Keep out of this! This is none of your business!
I want you **to keep** Ms. Johnson **out of** our meeting.

Three new meanings are derived by using *to keep to (oneself)*: (1) to maintain an agreed-upon plan or promise, and (2) to remain withdrawn and alone. If you add *something* to the phrase (*to keep something to oneself*), it has a third meaning: “to maintain a secret.” Some examples:

If we **keep to** our original plan, we’ll achieve our goals.
The old woman **kept** more and more **to herself**.
Please **keep** this information **to yourself**. Don’t tell anyone.

The phrasal verb *to keep up (with)* also has three meanings: (1) to hold someone or something upright, (2) to prevent a person from falling asleep, and (3) using the preposition *with*, to remain equal with someone or something. Look at these examples:

Keep him up. Don’t let him fall.
He’s very sleepy, but somehow we have **to keep Jim up** until midnight.
I can’t **keep up with** you. Walk slower.

Kick

Kick is a regular verb and means “to strike with a foot.” Look what happens to its meaning when it becomes a phrasal verb.

The phrasal verb *to kick off* means “to start something” and comes from the start of a football game, which is the *kickoff*. It has a colloquial meaning that is casual and somewhat crude: “to pass away or die.” This second meaning is used without compassion:

Let’s **kick off** the meeting with a few words from Ms. Johnson.
The poor old man **kicked off** during the night.

In this form the verb *to kick out (of)* means “to evict someone or eject something from a place”:

Maria **kicked out** her boyfriend last night.
I **kicked** the boxes **out of** my way.

Knock

This verb is regular. It means “to strike, hit, or rap.”

With the particle *down*, *to knock down* means “to hit someone or something to the ground.” Here are some examples:

The bully **knocked** me **down** and ran off laughing.
The wind is going **to knock down** that old fence.

In this form the verb *to knock off* (*it, work*) derives a few new meanings: (1) to stop doing something, (2) using the pronoun *it* to make a rather rude meaning, “to cease a certain behavior,” (3) as a slang expression, “to murder a person,” and (4) using the noun *work*, “to conclude the day’s work.” As a noun—*knockoff*—the word means “an imitation.” Some examples:

You can **knock off** digging. The plans have been changed.
Knock it off! Acting like that isn’t funny!
The gangsters **knocked off** an old enemy.
My father usually **knocks off work** around 6:00 P.M.
He wanted a Rolex but bought a **knockoff** from a street vendor.

Look at the meanings that are derived for the verb *to knock out*: (1) to cause someone to become unconscious, (2) to develop or make something quickly, and (3) to cause something to stop functioning.

Bill hit the man so hard that he **knocked him out**.
That drink almost **knocked me out**.
The workers **knocked out** a prototype in a matter of hours.
A lightning strike **knocked out** the radio station.

Phrasal Verbs That Act as Nouns

The phrasal verbs *to kick off*, *to knock off*, and *to knock out* have a noun formation:

This party is the **kickoff** to a week of celebrating.
This isn’t a Cartier. It’s a **knockoff**.
The champ won the boxing match by a **knockout**.

Prepositions

exercise

21-5

Select the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

1. You run too fast. I can't keep **up with/to/out of** you.
2. With one blow, he knocked the man **on/out/it off**.
3. We have to **keep on/kick off/keep to** working until we're done.
4. The landlord kicked us **up with/off/out of** our apartment.
5. Knock **it/out/yourself** off. You're bothering me.
6. The carpenters **knocked down/kicked out of/kept up with** the wall in just a few minutes.
7. They kicked **out/out of/off** the parade with a patriotic march.
8. He was shot in the morning. He kicked **off/to/up with** in the afternoon.
9. What time do you knock **out/off/up with** work?
10. She's so lonely, yet she still keeps **up with us/off it/to herself**.

exercise

21-6

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase taken from the phrasal verbs formed from keep, kick, and knock.

1. The coach wanted them to _____ practicing.
2. Careful or you'll knock _____ the window!
3. How can we keep those kids _____ our yard?
4. You had better knock _____ before I get really angry.
5. If you keep _____ this road, you'll get there in an hour.
6. They had an argument, and she _____ him out.
7. The champ knocked his opponent _____, but he got up immediately.
8. If you pedal faster, you'll _____ with the other cyclists.
9. We'll _____ off the party with a few drinks.
10. What time do you _____ of work?

Put

To put is an irregular verb and means “to place or set.” Its principal parts look like this:

	Present	Past	Present Perfect	Future
you	put	put	have put	will put
he, she, it	puts	put	has put	will put

The phrasal verb *to put down (for)* has four new meanings: (1) to cease holding someone or something up, (2) to ridicule or demean someone or something, (3) to write down, and (4) using the preposition *for*, to sign someone up to participate in something. Look at these examples:

I don't want you to carry me. **Put me down!**
 I try very hard, but still you **put me down**. I can't do any better.
 The stenographer **put down** every word the lawyer said.
 Tim likes soccer. You can **put him down for** that.

In this form the verb *to put on* has three meanings: (1) to place on headgear or wear a certain garment, (2) to pretend, and (3) to tease someone. Some examples:

The woman **put on** a new hat and dress and went to the party.
 He's not really sick. He's just **putting on**.
 It can't be true! You're **putting me on!** Anna is married again?

This phrasal verb *to put out (oneself, of)* also has various new meanings: (1) to generate an abundance of something (often used as a noun: *output*), (2) to annoy a person, (3) using a reflexive pronoun, to allow oneself to be inconvenienced or to do a favor for someone, and (4) to eject someone or something from a place.

That new copy machine really **puts out**.
 What's the total **output** of this department each month?
 Professor Jones was really **put out** by all the silly questions.
 I really **put myself out** for you. Is this the thanks I get?
 Please **put** the dog **out**. I can't stand his barking.

To put up (with) has three new meanings: (1) to provide someone with housing (usually for one night), (2) to erect, and (3) using the preposition *with*, to tolerate someone or something:

It's storming. We had better **put you up** for the night.
 We always **put up** the Christmas tree in early December.
 I can't **put up with** your lying and cheating anymore.

Quiet

Quiet is a regular verb that means “to make calm or silent.” As a phrasal verb its meaning changes only slightly.

To quiet down means “to become calm or silent” or “to make someone calm or silent.” Here are some examples:

As the grieving woman came in, the room suddenly **quieted down**.
 Give the man a shot **to quiet him down**.

Prepositions

Rest

To rest is another regular verb. It means “to relax and enjoy an idle moment.”

In the form *to rest up (from)*, the meaning of the verb is not altered greatly. With the particle *up*, the suggestion is that the goal is to rest completely and not just for a moment. With the preposition *from* you can tell what activity is avoided to provide rest:

You're exhausted. I want you **to rest up** and leave everything else to me.
I ache all over. I need **to rest up from** all this exercising.

exercise

21-7

Select the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

1. Put me **on/up/down** for the refreshments committee.
2. The baby is feverish and won't **put/quiet/rest** down.
3. I need to rest up **for/with/from** all this exercise.
4. Carmen **rest up/put on/put up with** his lies for many years.
5. You're so hospitable, but don't **put down/put up/put yourself** out.
6. He's so excited, but he needs to quiet **on/up/down**.
7. I **rested up/quieted down/put up with** all morning and went to work at noon.
8. She's not sick! She's just putting **out/off/on**!
9. It can't be true! Are you **put/down for/putting** me on?
10. The janitor was **quieted down/put up with/put out by** all the garbage in the hallway.

exercise

21-8

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase taken from the phrasal verbs formed from *put*, *quiet*, and *rest*.

1. Why don't you _____? You've had a long day.
2. You're never satisfied with my work. You always _____ me down.
3. Spend the night here. We can put you _____.
4. When the class _____ down, I'll pass out the new material.
5. I love soccer. Put me _____ that team.

6. Tom _____ a dress and a wig for the Halloween party.
7. Anita can't put _____ his deceit any longer.
8. I think you should rest _____ that long trip.
9. He wished he could put his roommate _____ his house.
10. You can put the groceries _____ on that table.

Take

This is an irregular verb. It means "to receive, grasp, or accept." Look at its principal parts.

	Present	Past	Present Perfect	Future
you	take	took	have taken	will take
he, she, it	takes	took	has taken	will take

The combination of words *to take back (from)* has four meanings: (1) to return something, (2) to remind someone of something in the past, (3) to retract something that has been said or written, and (4) using the preposition *from*, to return something to the original owner from someone who had temporary possession of it. Some examples:

I **took** the tools I borrowed **back** to Jim.
 Hearing that song **takes** me **back** to when I was still in college.
Take that **back**! You're lying!
 She wants **to take back** the ring **from** me.

The phrasal verb *to take down (from)* has three new meanings: (1) to write something on paper, (2) to guide or transport someone or something to a place, (3) to dismantle or raze, and (4) using the preposition *from*, to remove someone or something from a high location. Look at these examples:

Take the phone number **down** for me: 555-0884.
 Ms. Johnson **took** the reports **down** to the meeting.
 If you don't know the way, I can **take** you **down** there.
 They're going **to take down** the old movie palace.
 Anna **takes** a box of letters **down from** the shelf.

To take in has three meanings: (1) to decrease the size of a garment, (2) to give someone shelter, and (3) to fool someone. Here are some examples:

I've lost some weight. I need **to take** these pants **in**.
 My parents **took** the homeless man **in** for the night.
 Robert **took** me **in** with one of his silly schemes again.

Another phrasal verb can be used with three different prepositions. *To take off (after, for, of)* has a variety of meanings: (1) to remove a garment, (2) often using the word *day*, to stay home from school or work, (3) to leave the ground in flight, (4) using the preposition *after*, to run in the direction of someone or something, (5) using the preposition *for*, to depart for a place, and (6) using the preposition *of*, to remove from a place.

Prepositions

The doctor asked me **to take off** my shirt.
I felt ill, so I **took the day off**.
The jet fighters **took off** in a matter of minutes.
When he saw the prowler, Mike **took off after** him.
Last night Jim and Maria **took off for** Vancouver.
She **took a spider off of** the piano.

To take on has three meanings: (1) to accept, (2) to hire, and (3) to become emotional about something.

You always **take on** too much work.
If you **take on** Bill, he'll work as hard as two men.
Anna often **takes on** about the death of her husband.

The verb *to take over (from)* has four new meanings: (1) to take control of a business, (2) to accept responsibility for something, (3) to deliver something, and (4) using the preposition *from*, to assume control of something from someone. Some examples:

The corporation **took over** two smaller companies.
Can you **take over** the Johnson account? They need someone like you.
I **took** the CD player **over** to Maria's house.
We're taking over the travel agency **from** Mr. Gomez.

Another phrasal verb with a variety of meanings is *to take up (with, on)*. It means (1) to raise the hem of a garment, (2) often using the preposition *with*, to discuss a person or issue, (3) to be involved in a special skill or hobby, (4) using the preposition *with*, to have an affair with someone, (5) using the preposition *on*, to agree to someone's proposal or offer. Look at these examples:

That dress is too long. **Take it up** a couple inches.
The committee **took up** the problem of recycling plastics.
I need **to take up** the question of Jim's employment **with** you.
My daughter **has taken up** stamp collecting.
My ex-wife **is taking up with** a man from Texas.
I'd like **to take them up on** their offer to buy my house.

Talk

Talk is a regular verb. It means "to speak or to converse."

With the particle *back*, *to talk back* means "to respond to someone rudely or disrespectfully." Some examples:

The boy has no fear of **talking back** to his father.
You shouldn't **talk back** to a teacher like that.

Phrasal Verbs That Act as Nouns

The verbs *to take down*, *to take off*, *to take over*, and *to talk back* have a noun formation. Nouns can often also act as adjectives.

The wrestling match was over with two quick **takedowns**. (noun)

Takeoff can be a dangerous time for an aircraft. (noun)

The **takeoff** distance is 1,500 meters. (noun used as adjective)

The **takeover** of our firm came as a surprise. (noun)

We learned of the **takeover** bid too late. (noun used as adjective)

Talking back to a parent is a terrible thing. (noun)

To talk someone into means “to convince someone of something”:

You’ll never **talk** me **into** investing in that stock.

Juan can **talk** anyone **into** anything.

The verb *to talk over* has two new meanings: (1) to discuss someone or something with another person, and (2) to use a microphone while speaking.

We have **to talk over** Barbara’s recent behavior.

They’re going **to talk** the matter **over** after lunch.

My boss loves **talking over** a microphone.

Phrasal Verbs as Participles

The phrasal verbs *to take back*, *to take down*, *to take in*, *to take off*, *to take on*, *to take over*, *to take up*, and *to talk over* can act as the participle in a passive voice sentence:

The books **are being taken back** by Tim.

The drapes **have been taken down** for cleaning.

They **were taken in** by his smooth talk.

The vases **will be taken off** the shelf.

The new girl **was taken on** last week.

Why **was** this firm **taken over**?

Your hemline should **be taken up** a bit.

The matter **will be talked over** in a private meeting.

Prepositions

exercise

21-9

Select the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

1. Ms. Brown will take over **from/off/on** Mr. Jones.
2. Let's sit down and talk this problem **into/over/back**.
3. I took everything **off of/down/back from** her apartment.
4. You shouldn't **talk back/take back/take over** to your mother!
5. You're not going to talk me **over/into/back** that again.
6. I'll take **down/off of/on** the curtains and wash them.
7. The shelter **takes over from/takes down/takes in** homeless people.
8. Take **on/over/off** your coat and relax.
9. That skirt is long. Let's take it **up/off/over from**.
10. My brother **takes over/took up/has taken in** with my ex-girlfriend.

exercise

21-10

Fill in the blank with any appropriate word or phrase taken from the phrasal verbs formed from take and talk.

1. A new company took _____ the factory.
2. His store is _____ several new employees.
3. _____ back to a teacher is terrible behavior.
4. In the summer the students took off _____ California.
5. Your waist is smaller. You should take _____ your pants.
6. I'd like to take you _____ your offer.
7. Anita _____ me into going to the dance with her.
8. The reporter took _____ every word I said.
9. You ought to _____ what you said to her.
10. No one talked it _____ with me.

Remember These Separable Phrasal Verbs

Sometimes *particles* have two possible positions in a sentence with a phrasal verb when the direct object in the sentence is a noun: after the object or before the object. But when the object is a pronoun, it has only one position: after the object.

You encountered these separable phrasal verbs: *to kick off*, *to kick out*, *to knock down*, *to knock off*, *to knock out*, *to put down*, *to put on*, *to put up*, *to quiet down*, *to take back*, *to take down*, *to take in*, *to take off*, *to take on*, *to take over*, *to take up*, and *to talk over*. In these verbs the particles are *back*, *down*, *in*, *off*, *on*, *out*, *over*, and *up*. Look at these examples that show the position of the particle with nouns and pronouns:

He kicked his shoes **off**.
 He kicked **off** his shoes.
 He kicked them **off**.

We knocked the wall **down**.
 We knocked **down** the wall.
 We knocked it **down**.

Jim knocked the bully **out**.
 Jim knocked **out** the bully.
 Jim knocked him **out**.

Put that dress **on**.
 Put **on** that dress.
 Put it **on**.

I can't quiet the boy **down**.
 I can't quiet **down** the boy.
 I can't quiet him **down**.

We took the curtains **down**.
 We took **down** the curtains.
 We took them **down**.

John takes his shoes **off**.
 John takes **off** his shoes.
 John takes them **off**.

Their company took our company **over**.
 Their company took **over** our company.
 Their company took us **over**.

Let's talk the problem **over**.
 Let's talk **over** the problem.
 Let's talk it **over**.

She kicked the woman **out**.
 She kicked **out** the woman.
 She kicked her **out**.

I knocked his hat **off**.
 I knocked **off** his hat.
 I knocked it **off**.

I put the baby **down**.
 I put **down** the baby.
 I put her **down**.

We put a shelf **up**.
 We put **up** a shelf.
 We put it **up**.

Take what you said **back**!
 Take **back** what you said!
 Take it **back**!

Mom takes the old woman **in**.
 Mom takes **in** the old woman.
 Mom takes her **in**.

Did they take another man **on**?
 Did they take **on** another man?
 Did they take him **on**?

Take the hem **up**.
 Take **up** the hem.
 Take it **up**.

exercise	21-11
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Select the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

1. Grandmother put on **it**/**an apron**.
2. We need to talk **it**/**these people** over.

Prepositions

3. I can't put up with **they/your insults**.
4. They'll kick off **them/the celebration** at ten o'clock.
5. We're going to take in **him/some boarders**.
6. The drug knocked **her/the doors** out.
7. Mr. Johnson took over **myself/our business**.
8. Put **we/the gun** down and turn around.
9. I'll measure the skirt and you take **it/the hem** in.
10. We need to quiet **he/your mother** down.

exercise

21-12

Write three original sentences with the phrasal verbs in parentheses. Use the same noun in the first two and place the particle in the two different positions that are possible. Use a pronoun in the third sentence. Follow the example.

EXAMPLE: (to put on)

He put his gloves on.

He put on his gloves.

He put them on.

1. (to knock down)

2. (to put up)

3. (to take over)

4. (to kick out)

5. (to put down)

6. (to take up)

7. (to quiet down)

8. (to knock off)

You have had only a small sampling of phrasal verbs and the prepositions that help to form them. It is important to recognize phrasal verbs in order to determine their actual meaning. Frequently, someone who is learning English *assumes* the meaning of a sentence knowing the meaning of the basic verb in that sentence. But the verb could be a phrasal verb and, therefore, the meaning might escape the learner.

When you identify a phrasal verb in a sentence, look it up in a good dictionary. In the submeanings of the basic verb are often frequently used phrasal verbs. Here is a sample dictionary entry:

come *verb* (**came, come, coming**) 1. to move to a place; to move here; to approach. 2. to arrive; to be present. **-to come about** 1. to happen or take place. 2. to turn to the opposite tack, as of a ship. **-to come to** 1. to revive; to regain consciousness. 2. to amount to

You will notice that *to come about* and *to come to* are both phrasal verbs, and the meaning of the phrases differ considerably from the meaning of the basic verb *come*. It is unwise to guess at the meaning of phrasal verbs. Rely on a good dictionary.