

CHAPTER - V

Prepositions

Study the following sentence from your previous textbook :

My grandmother always went **to** school **with** me because the school was attached **to** the temple.

The words that have been made bold are called prepositions.

Prepositions are a small set of English words or expressions that show the relationship between a noun or pronoun and another word in the sentence.

1. (a) The book is **on** the table.
- (b) The book **on** the table is mine.
- (c) I put the book **on** that table.
- (d) The table is full **of** books.

In the above sentences the preposition tells us the position of the book in relation to the table.

We have three types of prepositions :

Single word, multi-word and participle.

Single word prepositions are :

about	among	beside	during	into	on	through
across	at	between	except	like	over	till
after	before	beyond	for	near	past	to
against	behind	by	from	of	round	towards
along	below	down	in	off	since	under
Until	up	upon	with	within	without	etc.

Multi-word prepositions are :

according to	due to			
along with	except for	in addition to	in comparison with	
apart from	in front of	instead of	in relation to	
as for	in spite of	out of	prior to	
as to	by means of	opposite to	together with	
because of	for the sake of	owing to		
but for	with a view to	over and above		etc.

Prepositions with – ing :

excepting	barring	following	
concerning	considering	including	
pending	regarding		etc.

A preposition joins a noun / pronoun to another expression in the sentence. The other expression may be –

- (i) a noun / pronoun : The book on the table .
- (ii) an adjective : He is good at mathematics
- (iii) a verb : You must listen to your teacher.
- (iv) an adverb : He writes well for his age.
- (v) a wh-clause : I expressed my surprise at what he said.

Prepositions are positioned before nouns or pronouns. But sometimes they appear to have no nouns / pronouns as their objects at the end of a clause / sentence.

For Example :

- (i) Wh questions : What are you looking at ?
- (ii) relative clauses : This is the book I have been looking for.
- (iii) passives : I don't speak until I am spoken to.
- (iv) infinitives : There was no chair to sit on.
- (v) exclamation : What a difficult situation he is in !

But, if we study carefully, we will find that in (i) the end-preposition 'at' has the interrogative pronoun 'what' as its object and it has been shifted to the front of the sentence. Try to find the objects of other end-prepositions.

Prepositions can be grouped according to their functions. They can be –

- (i) **Prepositions of place** : by, beside, over, above, under, below, beneath, through, across, along, behind, before, between, opposite, off, towards, for, at, in, on, etc.
- (ii) **Prepositions of time** : at, in, on, by, for, since, from to, till, until, between, during, et.
- (iii) **Other prepositions** : like means of travel means of communication, instrument, agency, modes of payment, etc.

2. Prepositions of Place :

2.1. AT : is used to show the exact point : house, station, village, etc.

- (i) She is standing at the corner of the street / at the door / at the bus-stop.
- (ii) He lives at 95, Bapuji Nagar.
- (iii) She works at the public library / at the city General Hospital.
- (iv) The train arrived at Cuttack. (means Cuttack Railway Station)
- (v) They met at the club / at the station / at the party.
- (vi) He is at school / at work / at the doctor's.
- (vii) He is sitting at a desk / at the table.
- (viii) Candidates have to write their names at the top of / at the bottom of the page.

2.2. In : has the idea of being within a larger area; it also refers to a house or residence, when no specific one is mentioned. 'In' is used for places of work if they are buildings.

Examples :

- (i) He likes to spend the holiday in the country / in a village.
- (ii) He lives in London / in China.
- (iii) My brother works in a bank / in an office / in a factory / in a shop.

- (iv) He is sitting in the corner of the room.
- (v) He lives in Bapuji Nagar.
- (vi) Stand in a queue / in a line.
- (vii) He is playing in the playground / He is working in the field.
- (viii) He put the plates in the cupboard.

2.3. On :

(a) If the places of work are not buildings, 'on' is used :

- (i) He is working on a farm / on a rubber plantation.
- (ii) The meeting was held on the premises / on the campus of the college.

(b) 'On' is used to express the idea of 'touching' 'close contact' :

- (i) There is a notice on the notice board / on the wall.
- (ii) He is sitting on the grass / on the bench / on a chair (but in an armchair) / on the floor.
- (iii) He kept his books on the shelf.
- (iv) He is standing on the balcony.

(c) 'On' is used to indicate proximity, to mean 'close to'.

- (i) He is sitting on my left / on my right.
- (ii) Haridwar is on the Ganges.
- (iii) Cuttack-on-Mahanadi, a village on the frontier, a house on the main road, a town on the coast, trees on both sides of the river.

(d) He lives on an Island (you can see water all around).

(e) By / Beside :

He is sitting by / beside me / by my side (at my side).

2.4. 'Over' and 'Above' :

'Over' means both 'vertically above' and 'higher than', whereas 'above' means 'higher than'

Example :

The aeroplane is flying over the head. (vertically above)

He hung a calendar *over* the fireplace.

There is a temple *above* the house. (at a higher level)

Attendants held a large umbrella over / above the chief's head.

- (a) 'Over' has also the meaning of 'across', 'from one side to the other; 'to the other side', in every part of'

Example :

There is a bridge over the river.

He jumped over the brook. He climbed over the wall.

He is famous all over the world. He travelled all over Europe.

- (b) Both 'over' and 'above' express the sense of greater in number, weight, and 'more than'.

Applicants over / above the age of 30 must not apply.

2.5. Under, Below, and Beneath :

'Under' indicates a position lower than, it also means 'directly, below'.

Example :

The cat is sitting *under* the table.

He is sitting *under* the tree.

She is carrying her handbag *under* her arm.

He hid his face *under* the bed-clothes.

- (a) 'Under' is also figuratively used to mean 'less than'.

Children *under* the age of five cannot be admitted to this school.

His income per month is *under* five thousand rupees. He has about fifty workers *under* him. (It shows his authority or power)

- (b) 'Below' :

It means 'lower than'.

When the sun sets, it goes below the horizon.

Shall I write my name *below* the line ?

Your work is *below* the average.

He must be *below* (under) sixty years of age.

(c) Beneath :

It means 'directly under something' 'to or in a lower position than something'.

The dolphins disappeared *beneath* the waves.

The ground was slippery *beneath* her.

(d) (a) It is used figuratively to mean a lower or less important job, position, and rank.

She has married *beneath* her.

He regarded Prime Ministership itself as *beneath* his dignity.

2.6 Through :

It means entering at one side, on one surface, etc. and coming out at the other.

The road goes *through* the forest.

The Mahanadi flows *through* Odisha.

(a) It is also figuratively used.

He has come *through* many hardships.

2.7. Across :

It means 'from one side to the other'.

There is a bridge *across* the river.

Draw a line *across* the page.

(a) It also means 'at / on the other side of' :

The house is just *across* the street.

2.8. Along :

It means 'in a line from one end to the other' :

Trees grow *along* the bank of the river.

There are a lot of shops *along* this street.

- (a) It means 'in the direction of the length of' :

He walked *along* the road.

2.9. Behind :

It means 'at or towards the back of something' :

The boy was hiding *behind* a tree.

There is an orchard *behind* the house.

- (a) It also means 'not having made so much progress as' :

She is *behind* other girls in sewing / in mathematics.

2.10. Before :

It means 'in front of' :

The priest stood *before* the altar.

2.11. Between / Among :

'Between' is used when we speak of two persons or things. Among is used when we speak of three or more people or things.

Amar lives somewhere *between* the university and the hospital.

The Municipality is building a new road *between* the police station and the railway station.

Luxemburg lies *between* Belgium, Germany and France.

The sweets were distributed *among* the children.

2.12. Against :

It means 'next to', 'touching an upright surface'.

There was a ladder *against* the wall.

He is leaning *against* the wall.

- (a) It means movement in the opposite direction.

He is sailing *against* the wind.

2.13. Opposite :

It means facing each other.

There is a temple just *opposite* my house.

Ram is sitting *opposite* Gopal.

2.14. In front of :

He is standing *in front of* the class. (He is facing the students.)

There are some trees *in front of* the house.

(Trees are there close to the front part of the house.)

There is a man standing *in front of* me.

(I am facing the man and the man is very near to me.)

2.15. Off, out of, from are used for direction :

‘Off’ has the meaning ‘from the surface of’ and ‘down from’.

Take the book *off* the table.

He fell *off* the horse.

Out of : It means ‘from the interior’.

He took the handkerchief *out of* his pocket.

‘From’

They ran *from* the place of the murder.

2.16 To, towards, for are used for direction.

He is ran *towards* a safe place.

He is threw a ball *to* the children. [He threw a stone at the dog.]

He left *for* home.

He set off *for* London.

Activity - 1

Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with appropriate prepositions :

(i) The young men are swimming _____ the sea.

(ii) There is a label _____ the medicine bottle.

(iii) There is a TV set _____ the corner of the room.

(iv) London is _____ the Thames.

(v) John was brought up _____ a farm, but at the age of sixty he was sent to work _____ a shop.

- (vi) When we visited Hyderabad, we stayed _____ the Justa Hotel.
- (vii) I would prefer to work _____ a factory.
- (viii) He told me that he lived _____ 25 Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar.
- (ix) My father is employed as a cashier _____ the local branch of the Allahabad Bank.
- (x) He was _____ me at school. (Suggesting 'lower than')
- (xi) My hat fell _____ a chair as I was leaving the room.
- (xii) He has ten men working _____ him.
- (xiii) They were standing _____ the hillside.
- (xiv) They were walking together _____ the beach.
- (xv) He waited half an hour _____ the corner of the street.
- (xvi) She divided the cake _____ her five children.
- (xvii) I can't see any difference _____ these two books.
- (xviii) She met him _____ the front door.
- (xix) I was getting late, so we set off _____ home.
- (xx) He couldn't keep himself from falling _____ the wall.

3. Prepositions of Time :

[at, in, on, for, since, by, from, to, till, until, between, during, after, before]

3.1 At

It is used with exact point of time and with the names of festivals.

e.g. He arrived here *at* three o'clock / *at* half past ten / *at* midday / *at* midnight / *at* dawn / *at* daybreak / *at* sunrise / *at* sunset / *at* dusk / *at* the weekend / *at* weekends / *at* Christmas / *at* Easter / *at* Holi / *at* Diwali / *at* the New Year.

He is in bed *at* this moment. He was in bed *at* that moment.

3.2. In

It is used with seasons, years and parts of months and days.

e.g. He came here *in* winter / *in* summer / *in* 2005 / *in* January / *in* the morning / *in* the afternoon / *in* the evening / *in* the twilight / *in* the night (but at night).

It is used with the Future Time to show the period at the end of which an action will happen.

e.g. This project will be finished *in* six months' time.

He will arrive *in* ten minutes.

It is used to show a period of time.

e.g. It was done *in* a day.

It happened *in* my childhood / *in* my schooldays / *in* my youth / *in* my old age.

3.3. On

It is used with specific dates and days.

e.g. I saw her *on* March 15, 2005 / *on* 15th March / *on* Thursday / *on* a Sunday morning / *on* a winter evening / *on* a fine morning / *on* her birthday / *on* the occasion of her 20th birthday / *on* New Year's Day / *on* Christmas evening / *on* the Republic Day / *on* the evening of 15 August (but in the evening on 15 August) / *on* that day.

3.4. By

It is used to show the latest time at which an action will be finished. It is usually used with the Future Time.

e.g. The show will probably be over *by* eight o'clock.

Applications must reach the office *by* 20th June.

3.5. For

It is used with a period of time.

e.g. He has lived here *for* one year / *for* the last year / *for* the last three years.

It rained *for* three hours.

3.6. Since

It is used with a point of time in the past from which some action began and continues until the time of speaking. It is generally used with Perfect Tense (either Simple or Continuous).

e.g. It has been raining *since* 6 o'clock this morning / *since* Monday last / *since* last week.

I have lived (have been living) here *since* 2000 / *since* last January / *since* Jan. 2000 / *since* 15 Jan. 2000 / *since* childhood / *since* last year / *since* I was born.

3.7. From ... to / till / until

e.g. The road will be closed *from* Friday evening *to / till / until* Monday morning.

Without using 'from' we can also use 'till / until'.

e.g. The book fair continued till / until Friday.

3.8. Between

You can see the doctor *between* 8 a.m. and 12 noon.

3.9. During

It is with an action that took place or is to take place.

e.g. The fire broke out *during* the night.

He was absent from home *during* the vacation / *during* the holidays. He lost his legs during the war. I will see you *during* the week.

3.10 Some phrases indicating time : On time / in (good) time

On time : It is used with an action or event taking place at the exact or correct time and as per schedule or timetable.

The train arrived at the station *on time*.

The teacher came to the class *on time*.

The magic show started *on time*.

3.11. In (good) time :

It means 'earlier than'.

e.g. He reached the airport *in time* to see his friend off.

He arrived *in time* to attend the meeting.

Prepositions, 'on', 'in' are not used with some adverbials like next morning, last week, last Monday, next Monday, yesterday, tomorrow, today, this morning, this week, every morning, and every week.

e.g. He will visit his uncle's house next Friday (not 'on next Friday')

But we can say – He will visit his uncle's house *on* Friday next.

He saw his friend last Monday. (he saw his friend *on* Monday last).

He went to Kanpur last month (not 'in last month').

He came here this morning (not 'in this morning')

Activity - 2

Fill in the following blank spaces with appropriate prepositions.

- (i) The meeting started _____ ten o'clock.
- (ii) The house should be finished _____ next month.
- (iv) He has been sick _____ the day he arrived.
- (v) He came here _____ a winter evening.
- (vi) He has been ill _____ the last month.
- (vii) He has been ill _____ last month.
- (viii) The train never arrives _____ time.
- (ix) The Second World War ended _____ 1945.
- (x) We leave for France _____ Friday.
- (xi) We are having a party _____ New Year.
- (xii) The work must be finished _____ December.
- (xiii) He started his journey _____ daybreak.

4.1. Prepositions indicating means of travel

He goes to college daily by bus / by car / by train / by taxi / bicycle / rickshaw.

We can say – by air / by aeroplane / by sea / by ship / by water / by boat / by road / by land.

But if an article (a, the) is used before the **means of travel**, the preposition 'on' or 'in' is usually used :

He went to college on his / a / the bicycle / on the / a bus / on the train / on the rickshaw / on the motor bike / on horse back / on foot.

He went to London on the / a plane / on a ship. But for 'car' and 'boat' 'in' is generally used.

He went to Bhubaneswar in a car.

4.2. Modes of Communication

He sent the message by post / by cable / by telegram / by telephone / by hand / by letter / by radio / by e-mail / by mail.

He talked to his friend *by* telephone. But we say – He talked about this *on* / *over* the telephone. He is watching the news *on* television.

He heard an interesting programme *on* the radio.

Mode of payment

He paid the bill *by* cheque / *by* credit card / *in* cash.

4.3. Prepositions of instrument

With : He wrote the letter *with* a pen / with a pencil.

He cut the apple *with* a knife.

He saw the accident *with* his own eyes.

He is walking *with* a stick. He took something *with* both hands.

But we say– The letter was written in ink / in pencil. The picture was painted in oils.

4.4. Prepositions of agency, means, instrumentality

The temple was designed *by* Rabi. (agency)

He makes a living *by* teaching. (means)

He was killed *by* lightning. (instrumentality)

The man was killed *by* a falling chimney.

Activity - 3

- (i) He went to America _____ an aeroplane.
- (ii) He went to Howrah _____ the Coromondal Express.
- (iii) He sent the books _____ registered parcel.
- (iv) He dug the pit _____ a shovel.
- (v) He talked to his friend _____ telephone.
- (vi) He paid his dues _____ cash.
- (vii) If you haven't got any cash on you, you can pay _____ cheque.
- (viii) The answer was written _____ a pencil.
- (ix) The answer was written _____ pencil.

5. Idiomatic uses of Prepositions

at play	by chance / by accident	in need
at work	by design	in a hurry
at heart	by mistake	in debt
at breakfast / lunch	by name	in danger
at dinner	by sight	in fun
at table (having a meal)	by day (during the day)	in particular
at home	by night	in trouble
at will	by good fortune	in general
at ease	by oneself	in due course
at last	by no means	in short
at length	by all means	in brief
at hand	by surprise	in a word
at random	for sale, for pleasure	in work (having a job)
at rest	in all	in the end
at once (immediately)		in use
on business	on the whole	out of place

on fire	on the contrary	out of control
on holiday	on the other hand	out of use
on foot / on horseback	on leave	out of danger
on sale	on a visit	out of work
on purpose	on picnic	out of date
on (an / the) average	on a journey	out of question
on duty / guard	on one's way	out of sight
off duty		out of order
on no account	on second thoughts	out of reach
		out of practice
under control		
within hearing		
within reach		

Activity - 4

Supply appropriate prepositions in the following blanks.

- (i) His decision took me _____ surprise.
- (ii) He is very kind _____ heart.
- (iii) Rabi has been _____ holiday for the last two weeks.
- (iv) The house is _____ sale.
- (v) There were one hundred people there _____ all.
- (vi) I was able to know _____ sight.
- (vii) He acted _____ once to save the boy's life.
- (viii) When I arrived in his house, he was _____ lunch.
- (ix) He is _____ a visit to Delhi.

6. Some verbs are followed by definite prepositions.

If the preposition can be changed, the meaning of the sentence also changes.
Here are some verbs followed by definite prepositions.

- (i) Inquire / remind / worry + about
- (ii) Inquire + after
- (iii) Protest / warn + against
- (iv) Aim / knock / smile + at
- (v) Admire / blame / leave / provide / search / thank + for
- (vi) Die / differ / exempt / hear / made / prevent / recover / save + from
- (vii) Believe / deal / interfere / invest / specialise / trust + in
- (viii) Accuse / approve / boast / complain / consist / cure / die / made / remind / rob
/ warn + of
- (ix) Agree / attend / congratulate / depend / insist / knock / live / spend + on
- (x) Worry + over
- (xi) Agree / appeal / apologies / apply / attend / belong / compare / complain /
invite / object / prefer +to
- (xii) Agree / charge / compare / collide / contrast / deal / differ / fill / interfere /
provide / replace / share / sympathise / tremble + with.

Use of some prepositions are given below :

- Inquire about** : He inquired about the advertisement in the newspaper.
- Inquire after** : He called me aside to inquire after my daughter.
- Warn against** : He warned me against swimming in the sea.
- Warn of** : He warned me of danger.
- Die of** : He died of cholera / his illness / old age / hunger.
- Die from** : He died from overeating / wounds / starvation.
- Complain of** : He complained of a pain in his chest / toothache.
- Complain to** : He complained to the headmaster about lack of good drinking water.
- Complain about** : He complained to the police about the theft in his house.
- Agree to** : They agreed to my proposal.
- Agree with** : Hari agreed with me on this point.

Agree on : They all agreed on the date of examination.

Remind about : He reminded me about the meeting of 6 o'clock.

Remind of : The bicycle reminded him of his young days.

Made of : The ring is made of gold.

Made from : Butter is made from milk.

Flour is made from wheat.

Compare with : He compared Shakespeare with Kalidas.

Compare to : The poet compared her face to the moon. (between two dissimilar things)

Activity - 5

Insert appropriate prepositions in the following blank spaces :

- (i) Let us invite them all _____ dinner.
- (ii) I hastened to assure him _____ my support.
- (iii) He borrowed a pen _____ me.
- (iv) His failure has completely discouraged him _____ trying again.
- (v) I like to indulge _____ a hot bath.
- (vi) We congratulate you _____ becoming a father.
- (vii) Students should concentrate _____ studies.
- (viii) Everybody has been warned _____ the danger.
- (ix) They reminded me _____ the meeting.

7. Adjectives followed by definite prepositions :

There are some adjectives which are followed by definite prepositions.

For Example :

- (i) Anxious / careful / careless / excited / sorry / worried + about
- (ii) Angry / delighted / good / bad / quick / shocked / surprised + at
- (iii) Shocked / surprised + by
- (iv) Eligible / fit / responsible / sorry / useful + for
- (v) Absent / different + from

- (vi) Blind / interested + in
- (vii) Afraid / ashamed / aware / capable / careful / certain / confident / conscious / envious / fond / full / hopeful / innocent / jealous / proud / sure / tired / worthy + of
- (viii) Keen + on
- (ix) Applicable / blind / familiar / faithful / grateful / harmful / indifferent / kind / known / identical / loyal / useful + to
- (x) affectionate + towards
- (xi) Angry / careful / delighted / disappointed / disgusted / familiar / ill / pleased / satisfied + with

Activity - 6

Fill in the blanks with appropriate prepositions :

- (i) Don't be impolite _____ your elders.
- (ii) You shouldn't be rude _____ them.
- (iii) Some people are cruel _____ animals.
- (iv) Are you angry _____ what happened ?
- (v) The old man is very furious _____ me.
- (vi) I am contented _____ what I have.
- (vii) I am tired _____ arguing with you.
- (viii) The diet here is deficient _____ vitamins.
- (ix) I am very glad _____ seeing you.
- (x) You must be conscious _____ your speech and action.
- (xi) I am now short _____ funds.
- (xii) His income is sufficient _____ his needs.

8. Nouns followed by definite prepositions :

Some nouns are usually followed by definite prepositions.

For Example :

- (i) Opinion / view + about
- (ii) Resemblance + between

- (iii) Admiration / attraction / appetite / cause / cure / demand / dislike / love / pity
/ reason / remedy / room / sympathy + for
- (iv) Belief / difficulty / success + in
- (v) Advantage / cause / knowledge / proof + of
- (vi) Effect / influence / opinion / view + on
- (vii) Access / alternative / consent / resemblance / solution + to
- (viii) Attitude / duty + towards
- (ix) Difficulty + with

Activity - 7

Fill in the blank spaces with appropriate prepositions.

- (i) I have a good relationship _____ my neighbours.
- (ii) There is a sharp fall _____ demand for gold.
- (iii) There is no difference _____ a steam engine and an oil engine.
- (iv) What is your reaction _____ the news ?
- (v) His progress _____ studies is very satisfactory.
- (vi) They had a discussion _____ the topic.
- (vii) His familiarity _____ the place saved him from a lot of troubles.
- (viii) He has a great admiration _____ my talent.
- (ix) He is in agreement _____ my views on this subjects.
- (x) His performance made an impression _____ me.

