

4. The whales first to arrive are sighted sometime in late November, after completing a 3,000-mile journey.
5. The humpbacks last to migrate to Hawaii arrive by December late or January early.

EXERCISE 41-2 Consulting all sections of this chapter, find and correct any errors in word order.

1. A beautiful few flowers began to bloom in my garden this week.
2. A neighbor asked me, “You did grow all these yourself?”
3. “Yes,” I replied, “the roses are my favorite husband’s, but the tulips are my favorite.”
4. My neighbor, who extremely was impressed with my gardening efforts, decided to grow some flowers of her own.
5. Weeks later, as I strolled by her house, I saw her planting happily seeds from her favorite type of plant—petunias.

CHAPTER 42

Prepositions

Prepositions function with other words in PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES (7n). Prepositional phrases usually indicate *where* (direction or location), *how* (by what means or in what way), or *when* (at what time or how long) about the words they modify.

This chapter can help you with several uses of prepositions, which function in combination with other words in ways that are often idiomatic—that is, peculiar to the language. The meaning of an IDIOM differs from the literal meaning of each individual word. For example, the word *break* usually refers to shattering, but the sentence *Yao-Ming broke into a smile* means that a smile appeared on Yao-Ming’s face. Knowing which preposition to use in a specific context takes much experience in reading, listening to, and speaking the language. A dictionary such as the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* or the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* can be especially helpful when you need to find the correct preposition to use in cases not covered by this chapter.

42a How can I recognize prepositions?

Box 42-1 on the next page lists many common prepositions.

BOX 42-1 SUMMARY



Common prepositions

about	before	except for	near	through
above	behind	excepting	next	throughout
according to	below	for	of	till
across	beneath	from	off	to
after	beside	in	outside	toward
against	between	in addition to	over	unlike
along	beyond	in back of	on	until
along with	but	in case of	onto	up
among	by	in front of	on top of	upon
apart from	by means of	in place of	out	up to
around	concerning	in spite of	out of	underneath
as	despite	instead of	past	under
as for	during	inside	regarding	with
at	down	into	round	within
because of	except	like	since	without

42b How do I use prepositions with expressions of time and place?

Box 42-2 shows how to use the prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* to deliver some common kinds of information about time and place.

BOX 42-2 SUMMARY

Using *in*, *at*, and *on* to show time and place**Time**

- **in a year or a month** (*during* is also correct but less common)
 in 1995 **in** May
- **in a period of time**
 in a few months (seconds, days, years)



Using *in*, *at*, and *on* to show time and place (continued)

- **in a period of the day**
in the morning (afternoon, evening)
in the daytime (morning, evening) *but* **at** night
- **at a specific time or period of time**
at noon **at** 2:00 **at** dawn **at** nightfall
at takeoff (the time a plane leaves)
at breakfast (the time a specific meal takes place)
- **on a specific day**
on Friday **on** my birthday

Place

- **in a location surrounded by something else**
in the province of Alberta **in** the kitchen
in Utah **in** the apartment
in downtown Bombay **in** the bathtub
- **at a specific location**
at your house **at** the bank
at the corner of Third Avenue and Main Street
- **on a surface**
on page 20
on the second floor *but* **in** the attic *or* **in** the basement
on Washington Street
on the mezzanine
on the highway

42c How do I use prepositions in phrasal verbs?

Phrasal verbs, also called *two-word verbs* and *three-word verbs*, are VERBS that combine with PREPOSITIONS to deliver their meaning. In some phrasal verbs, the verb and the preposition should not be separated by other words: **Look at the moon** [not **Look the moon at**]. In **separable phrasal verbs**, other words in the sentence can separate the verb and the preposition without interfering with meaning: **I threw away my homework** is as correct as **I threw my homework away**.

Here is a list of some common phrasal verbs. The ones that cannot be separated are marked with an asterisk (*).

SELECTED PHRASAL VERBS

ask out	get along with*	look into
break down	get back	look out for*
bring about	get off	look over
call back	go over*	make up
drop off	hand in	run across*
figure out	keep up with*	speak to*
fill out	leave out	speak with*
fill up	look after*	throw away
find out	look around	throw out

Position a PRONOUN OBJECT between the words of a separable phrasal verb: *I threw **it** away*. Also, you can position an object PHRASE of several words between the parts of a separable phrasal verb: *I threw **my research paper** away*. However, when the object is a CLAUSE, do not let it separate the parts of the phrasal verb: *I threw away **all the papers that I wrote last year***.

Many phrasal verbs are informal and are used more in speaking than in writing. For ACADEMIC WRITING, a more formal verb is usually more appropriate than a phrasal verb. In a research paper, for example, *propose* or *suggest* might be a better choice than *come up with*. For academic writing, acceptable phrasal verbs include *believe in*, *benefit from*, *concentrate on*, *consist of*, *depend on*, *dream of* (or *dream about*), *insist on*, *participate in*, *prepare for*, and *stare at*. None of these phrasal verbs can be separated.

EXERCISE 42-1 Consulting the preceding sections of this chapter and using the list of phrasal verbs in 42c, write a one- or two-paragraph description of a typical day at work or school in which you use at least five phrasal verbs. After checking a dictionary, revise your writing, substituting for the phrasal verbs any more formal verbs that might be more appropriate for academic writing.

42d How do I use prepositions with past participles?

PAST PARTICIPLES are verb forms that function as ADJECTIVES (43e). Past participles end in either *-ed* or *-d*, or in an equivalent irregular form. When past participles follow the LINKING VERB *be*, it is easy to confuse them with PASSIVE verbs (8n), which have the same endings. Passive verbs describe actions. Past participles, because they act as adjectives, modify NOUNS and PRONOUNS and often describe situations and conditions. Passive verbs follow the pattern *be* + past participle + *by*: *The child **was frightened by** a snake*. An

expression containing a past participle, however, can use either *be* or another linking verb, and it can be followed by either *by* or a different preposition.

- The child **seemed frightened by** snakes.
- The child **is frightened of** all snakes.

Here is a list of expressions containing past participles and the prepositions that often follow them. Look in a dictionary for others. (See 43a on using GERUNDS after some of these expressions.)

SELECTED PAST PARTICIPLE PHRASES + PREPOSITIONS

be accustomed to	be interested in
be acquainted with	be known for
be composed of	be located in
be concerned/worried about	be made of (<i>or</i> from)
be disappointed with (<i>or</i> in someone)	be married to
be discriminated against	be pleased/satisfied with
be divorced from	be prepared for
be done with	be satisfied with
be excited about	be tired of (<i>or</i> from)
be finished/done with	be worried about

42e How do I use prepositions in expressions?

In many common expressions, different PREPOSITIONS convey great differences in meaning. For example, four prepositions can be used with the verb *agree* to create five different meanings.

agree to means “to give consent”: *I cannot **agree to** my buying you a new car.*

agree about means “to arrive at a satisfactory understanding”: *We certainly **agree about** your needing a car.*

agree on means “to concur”: *You and the seller must **agree on** a price for the car.*

agree with means “to have the same opinion”: *I **agree with** you that you need a car.*

agree with means “to be suitable or healthful”: *The idea of having such a major expense does not **agree with** me.*

You can find entire books filled with English expressions that include prepositions. Here are some common expressions: *afraid of*, *familiar with*, *famous for*, *friendly toward* (or *with*), *guilty of*, *patient with*, *proud of*.