

Prepositions

Prepositions join **nouns** and **pronouns** to other words in a sentence.

1) Mei is anxious **about** their performance.

The preposition **about** joins the noun **performance** to the other words in the sentence.

Prepositions are placed at the **beginning of prepositional phrases** to show a relationship between the **object of the preposition** and another word in the sentence.

Sometimes, **prepositions** join **nouns or pronouns** to certain **adjectives** when they occur after **linking verbs**.

2) Mei is **anxious about their performance**.

The preposition **about** begins the prepositional phrase **about their performance**. The **preposition** shows the relationship between the **noun performance (the object of the preposition)** and the **subject complement, anxious**.

Remember not to confuse the object of the preposition with the subject of the sentence. The **subject** will **never** be found within the **prepositional phrase**.

3) **Mei** is anxious about their performance. (**Mei** is the subject of the sentence.)
Mei is anxious about their **performance**. (**Performance** is the object of the preposition.)

Using Prepositions Efficiently

- Use the preposition **among** when referring to **three or more persons or things**. **Example:** The doll was found **among** the other toys.
- Use the preposition **between** when referring to **two persons or things**. **Example:** The photographer was stuck **between** two chairs.
- Use the preposition **behind** instead of **in back of**.
Example: You will notice the copy machine is no longer **behind** the desk.
(Not **in back of** the desk)



Content in this document was created by Math & Writing Centre tutors with the support of Student Learning Services and the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Humber College.



- Use the preposition **in** to indicate a **position or location** and use the preposition **into** to indicate an **interior location**.
Examples: This is the best golf course **in** Ontario.
The family moved **into** a different apartment.
- Use the preposition **like** to **introduce a noun or pronoun**, not a clause.
Examples: Ravi looks **like** my Pakistani friend. (**like** introduces a **prepositional phrase**)
They act **as if** (not **like**) they want to travel to China. (**as if** introduces a **clause**)
- Do **not** omit those **prepositions** necessary to **clarify a relationship**. **Examples:** I will graduate **from** Humber College.
These classes are more suitable for children than **for** adults. What kind **of** word-processing program do you use?
- Avoid wordiness by **omitting unnecessary prepositions**, particularly the word **of**. **Examples:** The mess was cleaned **off** the table. (Not '**off of the table**')
Both cameras were stolen from the studio. (Not '**both of the cameras**')
We decided that **all** the applications should be considered. (Not '**all of the applications**')

It is essential to learn how **various prepositions function in relation to the other parts of speech**. Use the dictionary to verify the meanings of prepositions and to check which prepositions are commonly used with certain nouns, adjectives, and verbs. The section entitled '**Idiomatic Use of Prepositions**' in **Canadian Business English** by Mary Ellen Guffey and Patricia Burke includes a partial list of **English idioms** that require specific prepositions to complete the meanings of specific words.

A List of Commonly Used Prepositions

about	below	from	on	according to
beside	in	on account of	after	between
in addition to	over	along with	but	in spite of
to	among	by	into	under
around	during	like	until	at
except	of	upon	before	for



Content in this document was created by Math & Writing Centre tutors with the support of Student Learning Services and the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Humber College.



<https://humber.ca/learningresources/>