

Grammar Lesson 11
Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

A preposition is a word that shows the relationship of a noun or pronoun to another word. This definition isn't especially helpful. Just seeing a list of prepositions is far better. However, this is not a complete list.

Ex:	Aboard	Beneath	Into	Underneath
	About	Beside	Like	Until
	Above	Besides	Near	Unto
	According to	Between	Next to	Up
	Above	Beyond	Of	Upon
	After	But (as in except)	Off	With
	Against	By	On	Within
	Along	Concerning	On account of	Without
	Along with	Down	Out	
	Amid	During	Out of	
	Among	Except	Outside	
	Around	For	Over	
	Aside from	From	Past	
	As	In	Since	
	As of	In addition to	Through	
	At	In front of	Throughout	
	Before	Inside	To	
	Behind	In spite of	Toward	
	Below	Instead of	Under	

A few notes on the above prepositions: first, this is not a complete list, but it's a good majority; second, you'll notice that sometimes two or more words work together as a preposition—these are called compound prepositions and are considered as a single preposition when seen in a sentence.

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends on a noun or pronoun, which is called the object of the preposition. The prepositional phrase may include any number of modifiers (adjectives, adverbs) of the object of the preposition.

Ex: The package **under the tree** is mine. (The preposition "under" begins the phrase and the noun "tree" is the object of the preposition that ends the phrase.)

Over the river and through the woods, to grandmother's house we go. (The preposition "over" begins the first prepositional phrase and the noun "river" is the object of the preposition that ends the phrase. The preposition "through" begins the second prepositional phrase and the noun "woods" is the object of the preposition that ends the phrase. The preposition "to" begins the final prepositional phrase and the noun "house" is the object of the preposition that ends the phrase.)

NOTE: The subject and the verb of a sentence will NEVER be in a prepositional phrase.

Ex: The package **under the tree** is mine. (If you remove the prepositional phrase, the sentence is "The package is mine." Thus, both the subject "package" and the verb "is" remain.)

Over the river and through the woods, to grandmother's house we go. (If you remove the prepositional phrases, the sentence is "We go." Thus, both the subject, "we" and the verb "go" remain.)

One of the boys is being punished. (If you remove the prepositional phrase, the sentence is "One is being punished."

Thus, both the subject "one" and the verb phrase "is being punished" remain.)

NOTE: Sometimes a word that looks like it should be a preposition is actually an adverb. For it to be a preposition, it must be part of a prepositional phrase, which means it must have the object of the preposition.

Ex: The plane circled **above the field**. (Here "above" is a preposition because it begins the phrase, which ends on the object of the preposition "field.")

The plane circled **above**. (Here "above" is an adverb because it is not part of a prepositional phrase.)

Please go **inside**. (Here "inside" is an adverb because it is not part of a prepositional phrase.)

Please go **inside the house**. (Here "inside" is a preposition because it begins the phrase, which ends on the object of the preposition "house.")

NOTE: Prepositional phrases are always modifiers. They either modify a noun or pronoun, making them act as an adjective, or they modify a verb, making them act as an adverb.

Ex: **In one of Walt Whitman's famous poems**, the voyage **across the seas** symbolizes the Civil War.

("In one" is the first prepositional phrase. It modifies the verb "symbolizes" because it answers where it was symbolized, making it an adverb phrase. "of Walt Whitman's famous poems" is the second prepositional phrase. It modifies the word "one" in the previous prepositional phrase. It answers which one, making it an adjective phrase. "across the seas" is the last phrase, modifying the word "voyage" because it answers the question which voyage, making it an adjective phrase.)

The captain died **during the voyage**.

("during the voyage" modifies the verb because it answers when he died, making it an adverb phrase.)

On the shore, people celebrated the ship's arrival.

("on the shore" modifies the verb because it answers where they celebrated, making it an adverb phrase.)

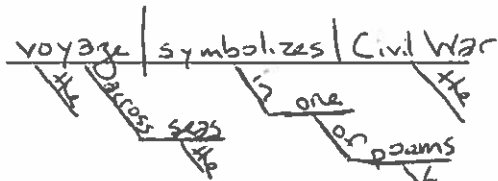
He sailed his ship **through stormy weather**.

("through stormy weather" modifies the verb because it answers where he sailed the ship, again making it an adverb phrase.)

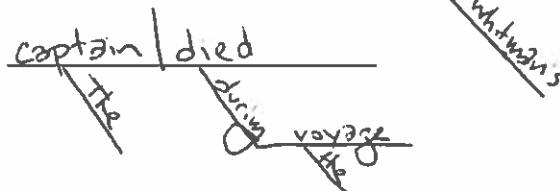
Diagramming Prepositional Phrases

This is fairly easy. The preposition goes on the slanted line immediately below the word it modifies. Connected to that line, but horizontal, is the object of the preposition. Below that on diagonal lines are any modifiers of the object of the preposition. This sounds confusing, but the examples, which are using the previous four sentences.

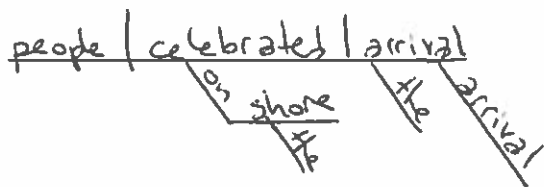
In one of Walt Whitman's famous poems, the voyage across the seas symbolizes the Civil War.



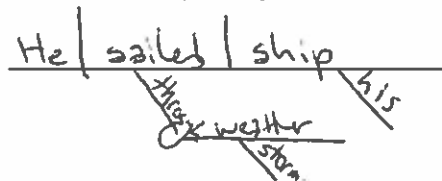
The captain died during the voyage.



On the shore, people celebrated the ship's arrival.



He sailed his ship through stormy weather.



Prepositional Phrases

Directions: Choose ten of the following sentences to diagram on a separate sheet of paper. Every word in the sentence should appear in your diagram. Below the sentences you'll see a ranking of which sentences are easy, medium, and hard, in order to help you choose which ones to do.

1. Everybody in town rejected the bill.
2. The carrier delivered a package at our new house.
3. We went to the library later in the afternoon.
4. After breakfast we divided the wood into two piles.
5. Watson was terribly concerned about the incident.
6. The railroad runs through the woods and over the river.
7. He listed the many causes of the revolution in France.
8. The minister issued a statement concerning the events of the last few days.
9. We had an argument about our policy on imports of shoes from Italy.
10. Who is going to the movies besides us?
11. My seat at the concert was behind a pillar.
12. We finally located the right kind of part in a junkyard near the river.
13. My cousins have remained active in politics since college.
14. Why do we always get so many bills around Christmas?
15. -----
16. Mary told the story to John.
17. Could you attend the meeting instead of me?
18. He found a parking place in front of the store on 6th Street.

Easy: 1, 2, 5, 16

Fairly Easy: 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11

Fairly Hard: 13, 17, 18

Hard: 9, 12, 14