**Prepositions**

Prepositions are words that show the relationship of a noun or a pronoun to some other word in the sentence, and they occur in larger structures called prepositional phrases (Lester, 2001). There are three important categories of prepositions: those of *place*, *time*, and *degree*. They are also sometimes used in idiomatic phrases (idioms are groups of words that have meanings not decipherable by defining each individual word, such as *raining cats and dogs*). In the table below you will find some of the most common uses of prepositions.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Prep.*** | ***Place*** | ***Time*** | ***Degree*** | ***Other*** |
| At | *Meet at the intersection.**Look at Adam’s hair.**Let’s gather at the market.* | *The meeting is at noon.**The gorillas gather at dusk.* | *Water boils at 100°C.* | *She works hard at making good grades.**She’s good at cooking.* |
| About | (all around) *The child ran about the field.* | *It is about 2:00 P. M. right now.* | *Heat the oven to about 350°.* | *It is a film about drug use.* |
| Above | (higher than) *Hang the painting above the sofa.* |  | *Is it above $400?**The temperature is above freezing.**His grade is above average.* | *He thought he was above suspicion.* |
| Against | *He pressed his face against the glass.* | *We were working against the clock.* | *The teams were four against four.* | *He won the game, against all odds.**He fought against his better judgment.* |
| Around | *The porch wraps around the house.**The dog likes to run around the kitchen.* | *The meeting will begin at around 3 PM.* | *I think the cost is around $14.**Our hike was around 5 miles.* |  |
| Before | *He bowed before the King.**She stood before the mirror.* | *He was elected before 2004.**She partied every day before the wedding.* |  |  |
| Below | *The fish are below the surface of the water.* |  | *The temperature was below 32°.**Her grade was far below average.* |  |
| Between | *He was stuck between a rock and a hard place.* | *I’ll meet you there between 3 and 4 o’clock.* | *Her height must have been between 5' and 5'5".* | *Just between you and me, I think this handout is crazy!* |
| By | *Place the iron on the table by the bed.* | *She had to return home by 10 PM.* | *Little by little, he dug himself out of the hole.**I missed the bus by 1 minute.* | *He finished his homework by himself.* |
| In | *The coat is in the closet.* | *The Renaissance ended in the 17th century.**Be there in 15 minutes.* |  | *Pay me in Euros.**Write the essay in French.* |
| ***Prep.*** | ***Place*** | ***Time*** | ***Degree*** | ***Other*** |
| On | *I used to hang out on that corner when I was young.* | *On December 12th, I will be 35 years old.**I’m having a party on Sunday.* |  | *I want to be an announcer on the radio.**I would like to attend a lecture on poetry.* |
| Over | *He carried an umbrella over his shoulder.**She was holding a sign up over her head.* | *I’ll be working on this research over the next month.* | *The meeting lasted over two hours.**The pencil cost over $3.**The temperature is over 90°.* | *I heard the ad over radio.* |
| Through | *I enjoy walking through the field.* | *I’ve come to love him more and more through the years.* |  | *I’ve stayed with him, through thick and thin.* |
| To | *I’m going to the theater tonight.* | *The computers stay on from 8 to 5.**I’ll be there at a quarter to 6.* | *I will help you to the extent that I am able.* | *He dances to the beat of his own drummer.* |
| Toward(s) | *She began walking toward the tree.* | *She stayed awake toward morning.* | *The temperature headed toward 100°.* | *We must work together toward a lasting peace.* |
| Under | *The ball rolled under the fence.**He crawled under the fence to get it.* | *In under 15 minutes, I will be finished with my work.* | *The pencil should have cost under $1.**There were under 6 women at the event.**The temperature has been under 90° for months.* | *The judge felt that the jurors were under duress.* |
| With | *He went with his friends to the store.* | *She grew more impatient with the years.* | *He ranked with the best of men.* | *She was not pleased with his remark.**The president did not speak with ease.* |

The information for this handout was compiled from the following sources:

Celce-Murcia, M., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The grammar book: An ESL/EFL teacher’s course* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle Cengage.

Lester, M. (2001). *Grammar and usage in the classroom* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Longman.