

Prepositions, Adjectives, Adverbs

Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

We have been working with prepositional phrases since the first day of class. They are a deeply important building block of the English language.

Prepositions combine with nouns or pronouns and their modifiers to create *prepositional phrases*.

Common Prepositions (there are many others that are less common)

about	above	across	after
against	along	among	around
at	before	behind	between
beyond	but	by	concerning
despite	down	during	except
following	for	from	in
including	into	like	near
of	off	on	onto
out	over	past	plus
since	throughout	to	towards
under	until	up	upon
up to	with	within	without

Prepositions often help explain **placement** (*against, beyond, in, towards*) and **time** (*since, until, before*), but they can add meaning in a many other ways as well. Most importantly, prepositions join with a noun or pronoun (the object of the preposition) and the resulting phrase adds meaning to a sentence, usually modifying other nouns and verbs.

Prepositions, Adjectives, Adverbs

More Prepositions

In the following sentences, identify all prepositions and describe the words they modify.

A train jumper from the town by the supply depot sat with his legs
dangling out of the car near the rear of the train.

One way to see the phrasing is below:

A train jumper (from the town) (by the supply depot) sat (with his legs)
(dangling out of the car) (near the rear) (of the train).

But is “dangling out of” a compound preposition or just “out of” with “dangling” following but modifying “legs”? Perhaps the following parsing is more appropriate.

A train jumper (from the town) (by the supply depot) sat (with his legs)
dangling (out of the car) (near the rear) (of the train).

Here are more good practice sentences (for the answers, see the end of these notes):

In the shade of a walnut tree, Zoey with great zest sat at the picnic table and ate dog biscuits from the package [that had been stored in the drawer by the door]. *I have placed the final adjectival relative clause in brackets.*

Old-time hockey is played on a frozen pond or lake. You must first clear the ice of snow. Gather all of your friends next. On skates with stick in hand, drop the puck between you and a teammate and start the game.

From Absecon to Chatsworth is 30 miles.

Prepositions, Adjectives, Adverbs

A Look at Adjectives

Adjectives fall into two major categories: *descriptive* and *limiting*. The descriptive are fairly straightforward. Let me glance at the various types of limiting adjectives.

possessive adjectives: *our* garden, *her* gloves, *your* job

relative adjectives: the man *whose* name you mentioned; I know *what* time it is.

interrogative adjectives: *Which* house? *What* kind? *Whose* idea?

demonstrative adjectives: *this* toy, *that* litter box, *those* hockey pucks

indefinite adjectives: *each* boy, *some* candy, *another* day, *either* dog

Articles: *a*, *an*, *the*

Negatives: many negatives are adverbs, such as “not” and “never,” but *no* is an adjective – “we have no bananas.”

Note how close adjectives and pronouns can be.

Interrogative Pronouns/Interrogative adjectives
Demonstrative Pronouns/Demonstrative Adjectives
Possessive Pronouns/Possessive Adjectives
Relative Pronouns/Relative Adjectives

You NEED to consider context.

Prepositions, Adjectives, Adverbs

Adverbs

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, verbals, and *sometimes* entire sentences.

Most adverbs modify verbs in certain regular ways:

by telling how: they moved *swiftly*

by telling when: they moved *immediately*

by telling where: they moved *forward*

by telling how much or to what extent: they moved *slightly*

Adverbs may modify adjectives or other adverbs, usually telling how or to what extent:

with adverbs: *rather* awkwardly; *very* awkwardly

with adjectives: *almost* six feet; *exactly* six feet

The function of an adverb, however, is not always easy to define. Some common adverbs (*possibly, indeed, however, not, therefore, etc.*) do not seem to answer the usual questions; nor do they always, as adjectives do, refer to specific words in the sentence:

He did *not* answer to his name.

Possibly the best route would be across the causeway.

It was *indeed* a disastrous venture.

In sentences like the last two, the adverb is sometimes said to modify the whole idea of the sentence rather than a particular word.

Prepositions, Adjectives, Adverbs

Many words that are commonly prepositions can be used as adverbs, the difference being that as prepositions they take objects and as adverbs they do not:

Kinsella strolled *by*. (adv)
Kinsella strolled *by* the house. (prep)

Don't look *down*. (adv)
Look *down* the valley. (prep)

Let's walk *around*. (adv)
Let's walk *around* the house. (prep)

Conjunctive Adverbs

A conjunctive adverb—*however* is the prototype—is a word that indicates the relationship between ideas but that does not simply link two independent clauses together in the manner of a coordinating conjunction. Conjunctive adverbs indicate the relationship between one idea and the next. These adverbs modify the whole sentence.

Google “conjunctive adverbs” for a decent list of these common adverbs. Here’s one:

<http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/conjunctiveadverb.htm>

Conjunctive adverbs can be a bit puzzling to punctuate. For an in-depth discussion of ways to punctuate them, consult the following webpage:

<https://blogs.stockton.edu/helpwithpunctuation/3-the-semicolon/a-semicolons-however/>

Prepositions, Adjectives, Adverbs

Prepositional phrases identified:

(In the shade) (of a walnut tree), Zoey (with great zest) sat (at the picnic table) and ate dog biscuits (from the package) [that had been stored (in the drawer) (by the door)].

Old-time hockey is played (on a frozen pond or lake). You must first clear the ice (of snow). Gather all (of your friends) next. (On skates) (with stick) (in hand), drop the puck (between you and a teammate) and start the game.

(From Absecon) (to Chatsworth) is 30 miles.