

# Writing Center

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## PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

A prepositional phrase is a group of words with a *preposition* at the beginning and a *noun, a pronoun, or a word group serving as a noun* at the end.

The noun, the pronoun, or a word group serving as a noun at the end of the phrase is called the *object of the preposition*.

Note that many prepositions show time or place or direction. Some word groups are considered a single preposition. Note also that *to* plus the simple present (base) form of a verb is an *infinitive* rather than a prepositional phrase. For example, *to walk* and *to run* are infinitives.

### Some Commonly Used Prepositions

about	away from	in addition to	past
above	because of	in spite of	since
accompanied by	before	including	through
according to	behind	inside	throughout
across	below	instead of	to
after	beneath	into	together with
against	beside	like	toward
along	between	near	under
along with	beyond	of	underneath
among	by	off	until
around	down	on	up
as	during	onto	up to
as long as	except	out	upon
as much as	for	out of	with
as well as	from	outside	within
at	in	over	without

## Purposes of Prepositional Phrases

To tell *when*: before dawn, during the day, in the Medieval period

To tell *where*: beneath the table, under the rug

To tell *why*: for joy, because of his allergy, for discovering the truth

To tell *how* or *in what way*: by bending the edges, by machine, in attitude, with strength

To tell *which one*: the man in the blue suit

To tell *what kind* or *type*: a city with a small population

## Examples

In the sentences below, the prepositional phrases are enclosed in brackets.

1. Harold McGruber lived [in Mrs. Smith's house].
2. [After dark] the cat [in the alley] prowls [throughout the neighborhood].
3. [For many years], we lived [in a small but cozy apartment] [near the river].
4. [During lunch] Mr. Smith quit his job [because of an argument] that he had [with his boss].
5. [Until morning] the vampires who reside [in my garden] remain silent; however, [at dawn] they moan and beg [for me] to remove the garlic [from the row].
6. I want to buy that brown dog [with the very long ears].
7. I like a dress [with a short hem].