

Writing with Detail: Prepositional Phrases

Identifying prepositional phrases

Adding detail with prepositional phrases

Varying sentence structure with prepositional phrases

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Review B

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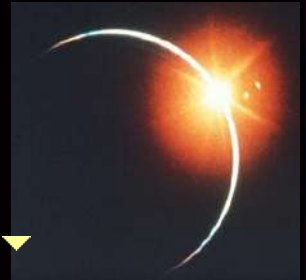
Identifying prepositional phrases

The subject and verb of a sentence give us basic information.

The earth revolves. ▼



Prepositional phrases give us information about time, place, and circumstance.



Place The earth revolves **around the sun.** ▼

Time The earth revolves **during the year.**

TIP

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Identifying prepositional phrases

A **prepositional phrase** contains ▼

- a preposition ▼
- a noun or pronoun
(object of the preposition) ▼
- any modifiers of the object ▼



inside

grand, glittering

rooms

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Identifying prepositional phrases

TIP

Grammar Gal Says...

Here is a way to recognize some prepositions.

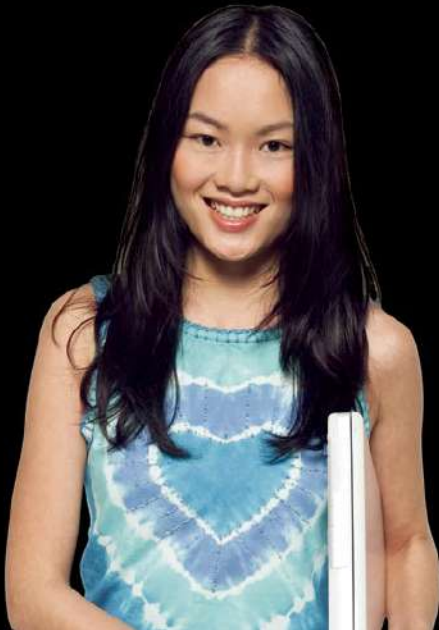
Fill the blank in the sentence
“The book lies _____ the table.”

The book lies **beside** the table.

Preposition

The book lies **cluttering** the table.

Not a
preposition



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Identifying prepositional phrases

Prepositional phrases can be lined up, side by side, to add even more detail to writing. ▼

around the sun during the year ▼



around the sun during the course of a year

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Identifying prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Identify each prepositional phrase in the following sentences. Note that a sentence may contain more than one prepositional phrase.

1. Look to the right as you enter the room.

Answer

2. Beside the door was a pedestal holding a large vase of flowers.

Answer

3. Nina decided to save the story for next month's issue of the newsletter.

Answer

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Identifying prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Identify each prepositional phrase in the following sentences. Note that a sentence may contain more than one prepositional phrase.

1. Look **to the right** as you enter the room.

The prepositional phrase *to the right* modifies the verb *look* and shows where the person is to look.

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Identifying prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Identify each prepositional phrase in the following sentences. Note that a sentence may contain more than one prepositional phrase.

2. **Beside the door** was a pedestal holding a large vase **of flowers**.

The prepositional phrase *Beside the door* modifies the verb *was* and shows where the pedestal was located. *Of flowers* modifies *vase* and shows what kind of vase it was.

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Identifying prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Identify each prepositional phrase in the following sentences. Note that a sentence may contain more than one prepositional phrase.

3. Nina decided to save the story **for next month's issue** **of the newsletter**.

The prepositional phrase *for next month's issue of the newsletter* modifies the verb *save*. Within that phrase, *of the newsletter* modifies *issue* and shows what kind of issue it is.

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Adding detail with prepositional phrases

Prepositional phrases provide detail by answering the following questions. ▾

Where? ▾

Our lunch at Joe's diner was delayed. ▾

When? ▾

Our lunch was delayed for an hour. ▾

How? ▾

Our lunch was delayed by a large order. ▾

What kind?

Which one? ▾

Our lunch with Rebecca was delayed.

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Adding detail with prepositional phrases

Here are ways to make your sentences more detailed.

1. Ask where, when, or how the action took place.

We crossed the stream. ▼

Where? ▼

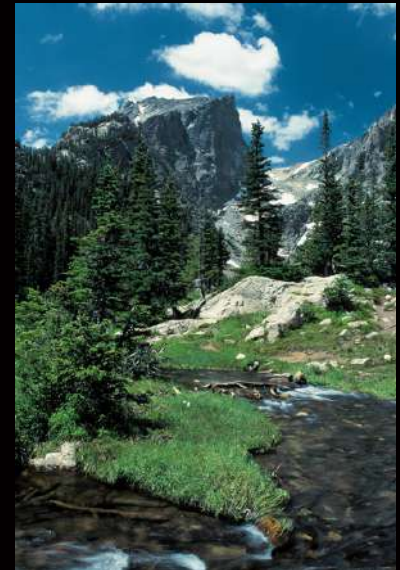
We crossed the stream **in the mountains.**

When? ▼

We crossed the stream **on Saturday.**

How? ▼

We crossed the stream **by jumping from rock to rock.**



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Adding detail with prepositional phrases

2. Look for nouns that you can say more about by asking “What kind?” or “Which one?”

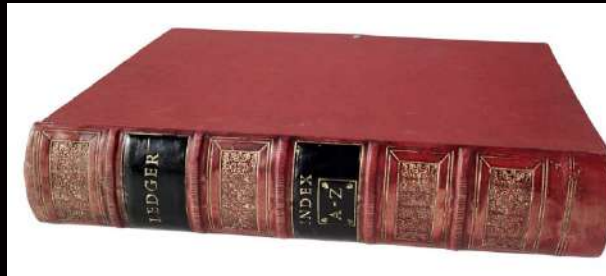
You can have that book. ▼

What kind? ▼

You can have that book **of short stories.** ▼

Which one? ▼

You can have that book **with the red cover.**



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Adding detail with prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Add detail to each of the following sentences by using prepositional phrases. Prepare to explain the question that each phrase answers.

1. Mosquitoes buzzed.

Answer

2. Traffic clogs the streets.

Answer

3. Students will learn best.

Answer

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Adding detail with prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Add detail to each of the following sentences by using prepositional phrases. Prepare to explain the question that each phrase answers.

1. Mosquitoes buzzed **over the lake.**

[possible answer]

The prepositional phrase *over the lake* answers the question "Where (did the mosquitoes buzz)?"

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Adding detail with prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Add detail to each of the following sentences by using prepositional phrases. Prepare to explain the question that each phrase answers.

2. Traffic clogs the streets **after four o'clock.**

[possible answer]

The prepositional phrase *after four o'clock* answers the question "When (does traffic clog the streets)?"

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Adding detail with prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Add detail to each of the following sentences by using prepositional phrases. Prepare to explain the question that each phrase answers.

3. Students will learn best **by reviewing their notes after the lesson.**

[possible answer]

The prepositional phrase *by reviewing their notes* answers the question "How (will they learn best)?" The phrase *after the lesson* answers the question "When (will they review their notes)?"

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Adding detail with prepositional phrases

On Your Own

The following sentences tell a story but are not very detailed. Add detail to each of the following sentences by adding prepositional phrases.

1. The main character finds a door.
2. It seems ordinary.
3. Examining the door reveals that it leads somewhere.
4. The protagonist tries the door.
5. Then she steps.

Answer

[End of Section]

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Adding detail with prepositional phrases

Possible Answers

The following sentences tell a story but are not very detailed. Add detail to each of the following sentences by adding prepositional phrases.

1. **In many stories**, the main character finds a door.
2. It seems ordinary **at first glance**.
3. Examining the door reveals that it leads **to another world**.
4. The protagonist tries the door **by opening it**.
5. Then she steps **through it into the world beyond**.

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Varying sentence structure with prepositional phrases

Many writers like to begin sentences with prepositional phrases for variety. ▾

The following passage does not contain any prepositional phrases. ▾

The story is ironic. The father and son switch roles. The father drives too fast. It is the son who reminds the father that they have responsibilities.



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Varying sentence structure with prepositional phrases

Notice how the passage becomes more interesting when the writer begins some sentences with prepositional phrases. ▼

In this ironic story, the father and son switch roles. The father **of the narrator** drives too fast. **On the snowy road**, it is the son who reminds the father that they have responsibilities **at home**.



Here the writer uses even more prepositional phrases to add information. ▼

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Varying sentence structure with prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

vary each of the following sentences by adding a prepositional phrase to its beginning.

1. Well-wishers left cards and balloons.

Answer

2. Tulips and daffodils appear.

Answer

3. George won a trophy and a savings bond.

Answer

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Varying sentence structure with prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Vary each of the following sentences by adding a prepositional phrase to its beginning.

1. **During the night** well-wishers left cards and balloons.

[possible answer]

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Varying sentence structure with prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Vary each of the following sentences by adding a prepositional phrase to its beginning.

2. **In the spring,** tulips and daffodils appear.

[possible answer]

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Varying sentence structure with prepositional phrases

PRACTICE

Vary each of the following sentences by adding a prepositional phrase to its beginning.

3. **For his first-place essay** George won a trophy and a savings bond.

[possible answer]

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Varying sentence structure with prepositional phrases

On Your Own

Combine each pair of sentences by turning one sentence into a prepositional phrase and adding it to the beginning of the other. Change other words as necessary.

1. Fish swam in the lake. The fish darted in all directions.
2. We met before the game. We met to discuss strategy.
3. You may notice an inscription. You may see it under the shield.
4. Twice as many people will have visited the city. They will visit it by next year.
5. Did you invite any other members of the debate team? Did you invite anyone besides Shawna?

Answer

[End of Section]

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Varying sentence structure with prepositional phrases

Possible Answers

Combine each pair of sentences by turning one sentence into a prepositional phrase and adding it to the beginning of the other. Change other words as necessary.

1. **In the lake** fish darted in all directions.
2. **Before the game** we met to discuss strategy.
3. **Under the shield** you may notice an inscription.
4. **By next year** twice as many people will have visited the city.
5. **Besides Shawna**, did you invite any other members of the debate team?

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Review A

Identify each prepositional phrase in the following passage. Then, indicate which question each phrase answers.

Several popular stories examine the thin line separating civilization from chaos. "The Most Dangerous Game" and *Lord of the Flies* feature people living in isolation who become like animals. Civilization, these stories suggest, requires the rule of law.

Answer

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Review A

Identify each prepositional phrase in the following passage. Then, indicate which question each phrase answers.

Several popular stories examine the thin line separating civilization **from chaos**. "The Most Dangerous Game" and *Lord of the Flies* feature people living **in isolation** who become **like animals**. Civilization, these stories suggest, requires the rule **of law**.

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Review B

Provide extra detail by adding prepositional phrases to the following sentences. For two of the sentences, place a prepositional phrase at the beginning.

- 1.The students concentrated silently.
- 2.A cold front will cause temperatures to drop.
- 3.That clock has been wrong.
- 4.Excited dogs leapt and barked.
- 5.I found fifty cents and a broken comb.

Answer

[End of Section]

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Review B

Provide extra detail by adding prepositional phrases to the following sentences. For two of the sentences, place a prepositional phrase at the beginning.

[possible answers]

1. The students concentrated silently **during the test.**
2. A cold front will cause temperatures to drop **by Tuesday.**
3. **For weeks** that clock **on the cabinet** has been wrong.
4. Excited dogs leapt and barked **at the visitors' approach.**
5. **Under the seat** I found fifty cents and a broken comb.

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