

Verb + preposition 1 to and at

A

Verb + to

- talk / speak TO somebody (with is also possible but less usual)
  - Who was that man you were talking to?
- listen TO ...
  - We spent the evening listening to music. (not listening music)
- write (a letter) TO ...
  - I wrote to the hotel complaining about the poor service we had received.
- apologise TO somebody (for ...)
  - They apologised to me for what happened. (not They apologised me)
- explain something TO somebody
  - Can you explain this word to me? (not explain me this word)
- explain / describe (to somebody) what/how/why ...
  - I explained to them why I was worried. (not I explained them)
  - Let me describe to you what I saw. (not Let me describe you)

B

We do not use to with these verbs:

- phone / telephone / call somebody
  - Did you phone your father yesterday? (not phone to your father)
- answer somebody/something
  - He refused to answer my question. (not answer to my question)
- ask somebody
  - Can I ask you a question? (not ask to you)
- thank somebody (for something)
  - He thanked me for helping him. (not He thanked to me)

C

Verb + at

- look / stare / glance AT ... , have a look / take a look AT ...
  - Why are you looking at me like that?
- laugh AT ...
  - I look stupid with this haircut. Everybody will laugh at me.
- aim / point (something) AT ... , shoot / fire (a gun) AT ...
  - Don't point that knife at me. It's dangerous.
  - We saw someone with a gun shooting at birds, but he didn't hit any.

D

Some verbs can be followed by at or to, with a difference of meaning. For example:

- shout AT somebody (when you are angry)
  - He got very angry and started shouting at me.
- shout TO somebody (so that they can hear you)
  - He shouted to me from the other side of the street.
- throw something AT somebody/something (in order to hit them)
  - Somebody threw an egg at the minister.
- throw something TO somebody (for somebody to catch)
  - Lisa shouted 'Catch!' and threw the keys to me from the window.

Verb + preposition 2-4 → Units 133-136 Ask for → Unit 133C Apologise for / thank somebody for → Unit 135B Other verbs + to → Unit 136D American English → Appendix 7

Exercises

132.1 You ask somebody to explain things that you don't understand. Write questions beginning Can you explain ... ?

- 1 (I don't understand this word.)  
Can you explain this word to me? .....
- 2 (I don't understand what you mean.)  
Can you explain to me what you mean? .....
- 3 (I don't understand this question.)  
Can you explain .....
- 4 (I don't understand the problem.)  
Can .....
- 5 (I don't understand how this machine works.)  
.....
- 6 (I don't understand what I have to do.)  
.....

132.2 Put in to where necessary. If the sentence is already complete, leave the space empty.

- 1 I know who she is, but I've never spoken to her.
- 2 Why didn't you answer my letter?
- 3 I like to listen the radio while I'm having breakfast.
- 4 We'd better phone the restaurant to reserve a table.
- 5 'Did Mike apologise you?' 'Yes, he said he was very sorry.'
- 6 I explained everybody the reasons for my decision.
- 7 I thanked everybody for all the help they had given me.
- 8 Ask me what you like, and I'll try and answer your questions.
- 9 Mike described me exactly what happened.
- 10 Karen won't be able to help you, so there's no point in asking her.

132.3 Complete the sentences. Use the following verbs (in the correct form) + the correct preposition:

~~explain~~ glance ~~laugh~~ listen point speak throw throw

- 1 I look stupid with this haircut. Everybody will laugh at me.
- 2 I don't understand this. Can you explain it to me?
- 3 Sue and Kevin had an argument and now they're not one another.
- 4 Be careful with those scissors! Don't throw them at me!
- 5 I glanced my watch to see what the time was.
- 6 Please point me! I've got something important to tell you.
- 7 Don't throw stones at the birds! It's cruel.
- 8 If you don't want that sandwich, throw it at the birds. They'll eat it.

132.4 Put in to or at.

- 1 I wrote to the hotel complaining about the poor service we had received.
- 2 Look at these flowers. Aren't they pretty?
- 3 Please don't shout at me! Try to calm down.
- 4 I saw Sue as I was cycling along the road. I shouted at her, but she didn't hear me.
- 5 Don't listen to what he says. He doesn't know what he's talking about.
- 6 What's so funny? What are you laughing at ?
- 7 Do you think I could have a look at your magazine, please?
- 8 I'm a bit lonely. I need somebody to talk to .
- 9 She was so angry she threw a book at the wall.
- 10 The woman sitting opposite me on the train kept staring at me.
- 11 Can I speak to you a moment? There's something I want to ask you.

→ Additional exercise 36 (page 323)

## A

## Verb + about

talk / read / know ABOUT ... , tell somebody ABOUT ...

- We talked about a lot of things at the meeting.

have a discussion ABOUT something, *but* discuss something (no preposition)

- We had a discussion about what we should do.  
 We discussed a lot of things at the meeting. (*not* discussed about)

do something ABOUT something = *do something to improve a bad situation*

- If you're worried about the problem, you should do something about it.

## B

## Care about, care for and take care of

care ABOUT somebody/something = *think that somebody/something is important*

- He's very selfish. He doesn't care about other people.

We say 'care what/where/how ...' etc. (*without* about)

- You can do what you like. I don't care what you do.

care FOR somebody/something

(1) = *like something* (usually in questions and negative sentences)

- Would you care for a cup of coffee? (= Would you like ... ?)  
 I don't care for very hot weather. (= I don't like ...)

(2) = *look after somebody*

- Alan is 85 and lives alone. He needs somebody to care for him.

take care OF ... = *look after*

- Have a nice holiday. Take care of yourself! (= look after yourself)

## C

## Verb + for

ask (somebody) FOR ...

- I wrote to the company asking them for more information about the job.  
*but* 'I asked him the way to ...', 'She asked me my name' (no preposition)

apply (TO a person, a company etc.) FOR a job etc.

- I think you'd be good at this job. Why don't you apply for it?

wait FOR ...

- Don't wait for me. I'll join you later.  
 I'm not going out yet. I'm waiting for the rain to stop.

search (a person / a place / a bag etc.) FOR ...

- I've searched the house for my keys, but I still can't find them.

leave (a place) FOR another place

- I haven't seen her since she left (home) for the office this morning.  
 (*not* left to the office)

## D

## Look for and look after

look FOR ... = *search for, try to find*

- I've lost my keys. Can you help me to look for them?

look AFTER ... = *take care of*

- Alan is 85 and lives alone. He needs somebody to look after him. (*not* look for)  
 You can borrow this book, but you must promise to look after it.

## 133.1 Put in the correct preposition. If no preposition is necessary, leave the space empty.

- I'm not going out yet. I'm waiting for the rain to stop.
- I couldn't find the street I was looking for, so I stopped someone to ask ..... directions.
- I've applied ..... a job at the factory. I don't know if I'll get it.
- I've applied ..... three colleges. I hope one of them accepts me.
- I've searched everywhere ..... John, but I haven't been able to find him.
- I don't want to talk ..... what happened last night. Let's forget it.
- I don't want to discuss ..... what happened last night. Let's forget it.
- We had an interesting discussion ..... the problem, but we didn't reach a decision.
- We discussed ..... the problem, but we didn't reach a decision.
- I don't want to go out yet. I'm waiting ..... the post to arrive.
- Ken and Sonia are touring Italy. They're in Rome at the moment, but tomorrow they leave ..... Venice.
- The roof of the house is in very bad condition. I think we ought to do something ..... it.
- We waited ..... Steve for half an hour, but he never came.
- Tomorrow morning I have to catch a plane. I'm leaving my house ..... the airport at 7.30.

## 133.2 Complete the sentences with the following verbs (in the correct form) + preposition:

apply ask do leave look ~~search~~ talk wait

- Police are searching for the man who escaped from prison.
- We're still ..... a reply to our letter. We haven't heard anything yet.
- I think Ben likes his job, but he doesn't ..... it much.
- When I'd finished my meal, I ..... the waiter ..... the bill.
- Cathy is unemployed. She has ..... several jobs, but she hasn't had any luck.
- If something is wrong, why don't you ..... something ..... it?
- Linda's car is very old, but it's in excellent condition. She ..... it very well.
- Diane is from Boston, but now she lives in Paris. She ..... Boston ..... Paris when she was 19.

## 133.3 Put in the correct preposition after care. If no preposition is necessary, leave the space empty.

- He's very selfish. He doesn't care about other people.
- Are you hungry? Would you care ..... something to eat?
- She doesn't care ..... the exam. She doesn't care whether she passes or fails.
- Please let me borrow your camera. I promise I'll take good care ..... it.
- 'Do you like this coat?' 'Not really. I don't care ..... the colour.'
- Don't worry about the shopping. I'll take care ..... that.
- I want to have a good holiday. I don't care ..... the cost.
- I want to have a good holiday. I don't care ..... how much it costs.

## 133.4 Complete the sentences with look for or look after. Use the correct form of look (looks/looked/looking).

- I looked for my keys, but I couldn't find them anywhere.
- Kate is ..... a job. I hope she finds one soon.
- Who ..... you when you were ill?
- I'm ..... Elizabeth. Have you seen her?
- The car park was full, so we had to ..... somewhere else to park.
- A babysitter is somebody who ..... other people's children.

A

**dream ABOUT ...** (when you are asleep)

- I dreamt about you last night.

**dream OF/ABOUT** being something / doing something = *imagine*

- Do you dream of/about being rich and famous?

(I) **wouldn't dream OF** doing something = *I would never do it*

- 'Don't tell anyone what I said.' 'No, I **wouldn't dream of it.**' (= I would never do it)

B

**hear ABOUT ...** = *be told about something*

- Did you hear about what happened at the club on Saturday night?

**hear OF ...** = *know that somebody/something exists*

- 'Who is Tom Hart?' 'I have no idea. I've never heard of him'. (*not heard from him*)

**hear FROM ...** = *receive a letter, phone call or message from somebody*

- 'Have you heard from Jane recently?' 'Yes, she phoned a few days ago.'

C

**think ABOUT ...** and **think OF ...**

When you **think ABOUT** something, you consider it, you concentrate your mind on it:

- I've **thought about** what you said and I've decided to take your advice.
- 'Will you lend me the money?' 'I'll **think about it.**'

When you **think OF** something, the idea comes to your mind:

- He told me his name, but I can't **think of** it now. (*not think about it*)
- That's a good idea. Why didn't I **think of** that? (*not think about that*)

We also use **think of** when we ask or give an opinion:

- 'What did you **think of** the film?' 'I didn't **think much of it.**' (= I didn't like it much)

The difference is sometimes very small and you can use **of** or **about**:

- When I'm alone, I often **think of (or about)** you.

You can say **think of** or **think about** doing something (for possible future actions):

- My sister is **thinking of (or about)** going to Canada. (= she is considering it)

D

**remind somebody ABOUT ...** = *tell somebody not to forget*

- I'm glad you reminded me about the meeting. I'd completely forgotten about it.

**remind somebody OF ...** = *cause somebody to remember*

- This house reminds me of the one I lived in when I was a child.
- Look at this photograph of Richard. Who does he remind you of?

E

**complain (TO somebody) ABOUT ...** = *say that you are not satisfied*

- We complained to the manager of the restaurant about the food.

**complain OF** a pain, an illness etc. = *say that you have a pain etc.*

- We called the doctor because George was complaining of a pain in his stomach.

F

**warn somebody ABOUT** a person or thing which is bad, dangerous, unusual etc.

- I knew he was a strange person. I had been warned about him. (*not warned of him*)
- Vicky warned me about the traffic. She said it would be bad.

**warn somebody ABOUT/OF** a danger, something bad which might happen later

- Scientists have warned us about/of the effects of global warming.

134.1 Put in the correct preposition.

- Did you hear about what happened at the party on Saturday?
- 'I had a strange dream last night.' 'Did you? What did you dream .....?'
- Our neighbours complained ..... us ..... the noise we made last night.
- Kevin was complaining ..... pains in his chest, so he went to the doctor.
- I love this music. It reminds me ..... a warm day in spring.
- He loves his job. He thinks ..... his job all the time, he dreams ..... it, he talks ..... it and I'm fed up with hearing ..... it.
- I tried to remember the name of the book, but I couldn't think ..... it.
- Jackie warned me ..... the water. She said it wasn't safe to drink.
- We warned our children ..... the dangers of playing in the street.

134.2 Complete the sentences using the following verbs (in the correct form) + the correct preposition:

complain dream hear remind remind ~~think~~ think warn

- That's a good idea. Why didn't I think of that?
- Bill is never satisfied. He is always ..... something.
- I can't make a decision yet. I need time to ..... your proposal.
- Before you go into the house, I must ..... you ..... the dog. He is very aggressive sometimes, so be careful.
- She's not a well-known singer. Not many people have ..... her.
- A: You wouldn't go away without telling me, would you?  
B: Of course not. I wouldn't ..... it.
- I would have forgotten my appointment if Jane hadn't ..... me ..... it.
- Do you see that man over there? Does he ..... you ..... anybody you know?

134.3 Complete the sentences using hear or heard + the correct preposition (about/of/from).

- I've never heard of Tom Hart. Who is he?
- 'Did you ..... the accident last night?' 'Yes, Vicky told me.'
- Jill used to phone quite often, but I haven't ..... her for a long time now.
- A: Have you ..... a writer called William Hudson?  
B: No, I don't think so. What sort of writer is he?
- Thank you for your letter. It was good to ..... you again.
- 'Do you want to ..... our holiday?' 'Not now. Tell me later.'
- I live in a small town in the north of England. You've probably never ..... it.

134.4 Complete the sentences using think about or think of. Sometimes both about and of are possible. Use the correct form of think (think/thinking/thought).

- You look serious. What are you thinking about ?
- I like to have time to make decisions. I like to ..... things carefully.
- I don't know what to get Sarah for her birthday. Can you ..... anything?
- A: I've finished reading the book you lent me.  
B: Have you? What did you ..... it? Did you like it?
- We're ..... going out for a meal this evening. Would you like to come?
- I don't really want to go out with Tom tonight. I'll have to ..... an excuse.
- When I was offered the job, I didn't accept immediately. I went away and ..... it for a while. In the end I decided to take the job.
- I don't ..... much ..... this coffee. It's like water.
- Carol is very homesick. She's always ..... her family back home.

A

Verb + of

accuse / suspect somebody OF ...

- Sue accused me of being selfish.
- Some students were suspected of cheating in the exam.

approve / disapprove OF ...

- His parents don't approve of what he does, but they can't stop him.

die OF (or FROM) an illness etc.

- 'What did he die of?' 'A heart attack.'

consist OF ...

- We had an enormous meal. It consisted of seven courses.

B

Verb + for

pay (somebody) FOR ...

- I didn't have enough money to pay for the meal. (*not* pay the meal)
- but* pay a bill / a fine / tax / rent / a sum of money etc. (no preposition)
- I didn't have enough money to pay the rent.

thank / forgive somebody FOR ...

- I'll never forgive them for what they did.

apologise (to somebody) FOR ...

- When I realised I was wrong, I apologised (to them) for my mistake.

blame somebody/something FOR ... , somebody is to blame FOR ...

- Everybody blamed me for the accident.
- Everybody said that I was to blame for the accident.

blame (a problem etc.) ON ...

- Everybody blamed the accident on me.

C

Verb + from

suffer FROM an illness etc.

- The number of people suffering from heart disease has increased.

protect somebody/something FROM (or AGAINST) ...

- Sun block protects the skin from the sun. (*or ... against* the sun.)

D

Verb + on

depend / rely ON ...

- 'What time will you be home?' 'I don't know. It depends on the traffic.'
- You can rely on Jill. She always keeps her promises.

You can use depend + when/where/how etc. with or without on:

- 'Are you going to buy it?' 'It depends how much it is.' (*or* It depends on how much)

live ON money/food

- Michael's salary is very low. It isn't enough to live on.

congratulate / compliment somebody ON ...

- I congratulated her ON her success in the exam.

135.1 Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first.

- 1 Sue said I was selfish. Sue accused me of being selfish.
- 2 The misunderstanding was my fault, so I apologised.  
I apologised .....
- 3 Jane won the tournament, so I congratulated her.  
I congratulated Jane .....
- 4 He has enemies, but he has a bodyguard to protect him.  
He has a bodyguard to protect him .....
- 5 There are eleven players in a football team.  
A football team consists .....
- 6 Sandra eats only bread and eggs. She lives .....

135.2 Complete the second sentence using for or on. These sentences all have blame.

- 1 Liz said that what happened was Joe's fault. Liz blamed Joe for what happened.
- 2 You always say everything is my fault.  
You always blame me .....
- 3 Do you think the economic crisis is the fault of the government?  
Do you blame the government .....
- 4 I think the increase in violent crime is the fault of television.  
I blame the increase in violent crime .....

Now rewrite sentences 3 and 4 using to blame for.

- 5 (3) Do you think the government .....
- 6 (4) I think that .....

135.3 Complete the sentences using the following verbs (in the correct form) + the correct preposition:

accuse apologise ~~approve~~ congratulate depend live pay

- 1 His parents don't approve of what he does, but they can't stop him.
- 2 When you went to the theatre with Paul, who ..... the tickets?
- 3 It's not very pleasant when you are ..... something you didn't do.
- 4 A: Are you going to the beach tomorrow?  
B: I hope so. It ..... the weather.
- 5 Things are very cheap there. You can ..... very little money.
- 6 When I saw David, I ..... him ..... passing his driving test.
- 7 You were very rude to Liz. Don't you think you should ..... her?

135.4 Put in the correct preposition. If no preposition is necessary, leave the space empty.

- 1 Some students were suspected of cheating in the exam.
- 2 Sally is often not well. She suffers ..... very bad headaches.
- 3 You know that you can rely ..... me if you ever need any help.
- 4 It is terrible that some people are dying ..... hunger while others eat too much.
- 5 Are you going to apologise ..... what you did?
- 6 The accident was my fault, so I had to pay ..... the repairs.
- 7 I didn't have enough money to pay ..... the bill.
- 8 I complimented her ..... her English. She spoke very fluently and her pronunciation was excellent.
- 9 She hasn't got a job. She depends ..... her parents for money.
- 10 I don't know whether I'll go out tonight. It depends ..... how I feel.
- 11 They wore warm clothes to protect themselves ..... the cold.
- 12 The apartment consists ..... three rooms, a kitchen and bathroom.

Verb + preposition 5 in/into/with/to/on

A

Verb + in

believe IN ...

- Do you believe in God? (= Do you believe that God exists?)
- I believe in saying what I think. (= I believe it is right to say what I think)

but 'believe something' (= believe it is true), 'believe somebody' (= believe they are telling the truth)

- The story can't be true. I don't believe it. (*not* believe in it)

specialise IN ...

- Helen is a lawyer. She specialises in company law.

succeed IN ...

- I hope you succeed in finding the job you want.

B

Verb + into

break INTO ...

- Our house was broken into a few days ago, but nothing was stolen.

crash / drive / bump / run INTO ...

- He lost control of the car and crashed into a wall.

divide / cut / split something INTO two or more parts

- The book is divided into three parts.

translate a book etc. FROM one language INTO another

- Ernest Hemingway's books have been translated into many languages.

C

Verb + with

collide WITH ...

- There was an accident this morning. A bus collided with a car.

fill something WITH ... (*but full of ...* - see Unit 131B)

- Take this saucepan and fill it with water.

provide / supply somebody WITH ...

- The school provides all its students with books.

D

Verb + to

happen TO ...

- What happened to that gold watch you used to have? (= where is it now?)

invite somebody TO a party / a wedding etc.

- They only invited a few people to their wedding.

prefer one thing/person TO another

- I prefer tea to coffee

E

Verb + on

concentrate ON ...

- Don't look out of the window. Concentrate on your work.

insist ON ...

- I wanted to go alone, but some friends of mine insisted on coming with me.

spend (money) ON ...

- How much do you spend on food each week?

Exercises

136.1 Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first.

- 1 There was a collision between a bus and a car.  
A bus collided with a car
- 2 I don't mind big cities, but I prefer small towns.  
I prefer .....
- 3 I got all the information I needed from Jane.  
Jane provided me .....
- 4 This morning I bought a pair of shoes, which cost £70.  
This morning I spent .....

136.2 Complete the sentences using the following verbs (in the correct form) + the correct preposition:

believe concentrate divide drive fill happen ~~insist~~ invite succeed

- 1 I wanted to go alone, but Sue insisted on coming with me.
- 2 I haven't seen Mike for ages. I wonder what has ..... him.
- 3 We've been ..... the party, but unfortunately we can't go.
- 4 It's a very large house. It's ..... four flats.
- 5 I don't ..... ghosts. I think people only imagine that they see them.
- 6 Steve gave me an empty bucket and told me to ..... it ..... water.
- 7 I was driving along when the car in front of me stopped suddenly. Unfortunately I couldn't stop in time and ..... the back of it.
- 8 Don't try and do two things together. .... one thing at a time.
- 9 It wasn't easy, but in the end we ..... finding a solution to the problem.

136.3 Put in the correct preposition. If the sentence is already complete, leave the space empty.

- 1 The school provides all its students with books.
- 2 A strange thing happened ..... me a few days ago.
- 3 Mark decided to give up sport so that he could concentrate ..... his studies.
- 4 I don't believe ..... working very hard. It's not worth it.
- 5 My present job isn't wonderful, but I prefer it ..... what I did before.
- 6 I hope you succeed ..... getting what you want.
- 7 As I was coming out of the room, I collided ..... somebody who was coming in.
- 8 There was an awful noise as the car crashed ..... a tree.
- 9 Patrick is a photographer. He specialises ..... sports photography.
- 10 Do you spend much money ..... clothes?
- 11 The country is divided ..... six regions.
- 12 I prefer travelling by train ..... driving. It's much more pleasant.
- 13 I was amazed when Joe walked into the room. I couldn't believe ..... it.
- 14 Somebody broke ..... my car and stole the radio.
- 15 I was quite cold, but Tom insisted ..... having the window open.
- 16 Some words are difficult to translate ..... one language ..... another.
- 17 What happened ..... the money I lent you? What did you spend it ..... ?
- 18 The teacher decided to split the class ..... four groups.
- 19 I filled the tank, but unfortunately I filled it ..... the wrong kind of petrol.

136.4 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences. Use a preposition.

- 1 I wanted to go out alone, but my friend insisted on coming with me
- 2 I spend a lot of money .....
- 3 I saw the accident. The car crashed .....
- 4 Chris prefers basketball .....
- 5 Shakespeare's plays have been translated .....