

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Prepositions are locators in space and time. They tell us where or when something is in relation to something else.

The following words are some of the **most common prepositions**:

about	below	excepting	off	toward
above	beneath	for	on	under
across	beside(s)	from	onto	underneath
after	between	in	out	until
against	beyond	in front of	outside	up
along	but	inside	over	upon
among	by	in spite of	past	up to
around	concerning	instead of	regarding	with
at	despite	into	since	within
because of	down	like	through	without
before	during	near	throughout	with regard to
behind	except	of	to	with respect to

A **prepositional phrase** is a group of words that includes a preposition, the noun or pronoun that is the preposition's object, and any words that modify that object.

The following sentence contains two prepositional phrases that are bolded:

- **According to the contract**, tenants must pay rent **on the third day of each month**.

In the first, "According to" is the preposition and "the contract" is the object.

In the second, "on" is the preposition and "the third day of each month" is the object.

Be careful where you include your prepositional phrases so you do not create a misplaced modifier:

- **Incorrect:** The farmer wanted to hire someone **to take care of his horse** who does not smoke or drink.
- **Correct:** The farmer wanted to hire someone who does not smoke or drink **to take care of his horse**.
- **Incorrect:** Offering those examples allows your readers to follow your discussion even if they do not have the documents you are discussing **in front of them**.
- **Correct:** Offering those examples allows your readers to follow your discussion even if they do not have **in front of them** the documents you are discussing.
- **Incorrect:** Garcia noticed Reid's mouth slightly open, gave a few not-so-gentle nudges after discovering that Reid was not moving, and placed a suicide note that she drafted **into Reid's jacket pocket**.
- **Correct:** Garcia noticed Reid's mouth slightly open, gave a few not-so-gentle nudges after discovering that Reid was not moving, and placed into Reid's jacket pocket a suicide note that she drafted.

Straight Sentences and Persuasive Prepositional Phrases

You can often choose whether to begin or end your sentence with your prepositional phrase.

- If you place the prepositional phrase at the beginning of your sentence, it becomes a dependent clause and needs a comma to separate it from the independent clause. In that position, the prepositional phrase also emphasizes its object in a way that colors the reader's perception of the independent clause.
- If you place the prepositional phrase at the end of your sentence, it does not require a comma because it simply completes the main idea of the independent clause.
 - **Beginning: Aside from the question of trademarks**, we need to address one or two issues
 - **End:** We need to address one or two issues **aside from the question of trademarks**.
 - **Beginning: As far as I know**, the summons has not yet been served.
 - **End:** The summons has not yet been served **as far as I know**.
 - **Beginning: In lieu of payment**, the employee will receive vacation time.
 - **End:** The employee shall receive vacation time **in lieu of payment**.

Cutting Unnecessary Prepositional Phrases

Be aware of overwriting or adding unnecessary words into your prepositional phrases. Always prefer efficiency and precision unless trying to obfuscate or hide information.

- “In order to” can simply be “to.”
- “During the course of” can simply be “during”
- “On a monthly basis” can simply be “monthly.”
- “Concerning the matter of” can simply be “about.”
- Also consider rewriting “of” phrases as possessives to remove unnecessary verbiage:
 - “The verdict of the jury” could simply be “The jury’s verdict.”
 - “The behavior of the defendant” could simply be “the defendant’s behavior.”