

Prepositions come before nouns and pronouns and show the relationship of the noun or pronoun (object) to another word in the sentence.

For example:

The girl *in* my class *with* the bright red hair got *to* the playground *before* me.

The relationships this shows are:

Where—*in* my class

Who—*with* the bright red hair

Place—*to* the playground

When—*before* me

When we look at the prepositional phrases, we notice something else—they belong to other parts of speech!

The phrase *in my class* is an adjective because it tells us about the girl.

The phrase *with the bright red hair* is an adjective because it also tells us about the girl.

The phrase *to the playground* is an adverb because it modifies the verb *got*.

The phrase *before me* is an adverb because it also modifies the word *got*.

Besides *in*, *with*, *to*, and *before*, there are other common prepositions: *about*, *above*, *across*, *at*, *beneath*, *beside*, *by*, *down*, *during*, *except*, *for*, *from*, *out*, *over*, *under*, *up*, *upon*, *throughout*, *underneath*, *because of*, *in spite of*.

A note of caution: Avoid superfluous prepositions—those prepositions that add nothing to the meaning of the sentence or the meaning you're trying to portray.

Where did she go [to]?

The box fell off [of] the truck.

The game is over [with].

I'm not [for] sure if I'm available then.

My favorite part [of this movie] is the ending.

Sometimes you can get rid of unnecessary prepositions by rewording the sentence. Just be sure that there is enough other information so your reader knows what's going on:

The girl [*in my class*] [*with the bright red hair*] got [*to the playground*] there first

If you need to know who the girl is or where she is, you'll have to leave a prepositional phrase or two in the rewrite:

The red-headed girl beat me to the playground

Finally, it's okay to end a sentence with a preposition; it can alter the meaning of a sentence in the way you intend and take the awkwardness out:

I wish I knew which band he sang *in*. vs. I wish I knew in which band he sang.

That's the house I want to look *at*. vs. That's the house I want to tour.

Where did she come *from*? vs. From where did she come?