Prepositions

What are prepositions?
Prepositions are a group of words that are used with a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to modify them. Most of the time, prepositions are used to show the relationship between words; they specify questions of time, location, direction, and description.

Ex: **On** *(time)* Sunday, my friends and I went to **Washington, D.C.** We walked down Pennsylvania Avenue **towards** *(direction)* the White House with **an eager stride**.

Prepositions for time and description are more nuanced, so they are discussed in more detail below.

Prepositions for Time
Prepositions that describe time can be used to signal:

- The date or time of day when an event occurred (**on** November 8, **at** 4:00 p.m.)
- The time of an event relative to another event (**after** I voted, **during** the election, **while** I watched the debate)
- The duration of an event (**for** the evening)

Prepositions for Description
Prepositions used for description can be used to signal:

- A specific object (**the candidate with** the yellow tie)
- What conditions something has (**in spite of** recurring scandals)
- How something behaves (**like** a circus clown, **instead of** a presidential candidate)
- Reasons for something (**because** I voted)

Specific Prepositions:
Below are commonly used prepositions and examples on how to use them:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td><strong>To</strong></td>
<td>Can signal a change in location or describes a goal to be completed in the future: Ex (location): The president is going to the White House. Ex (description): The president wants to speak to his daughter. - The verbs <em>speak, talk, and listen</em> are often followed by the preposition <em>to</em> - Watch out for the word <em>to</em>; it can be a preposition or an infinitive marker for an infinitive verb (like <em>to speak</em> in the sentence above).</td>
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<td><strong>On</strong></td>
<td>Can signal an object’s location on top of another or one point in time: Ex (location): An eagle landed on the president’s shoulder. Ex (time): The president will meet with her on Monday.</td>
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<td><strong>Onto</strong></td>
<td>Shows an object’s movement to a location on top of another object: Ex: The president moved the books onto the floor. - ‘Onto’ shows that the books were moved (to) and that they are located on top of the floor (on).</td>
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| **In** | Shows that an object is literally within or inside of another object or describes an abstract state of being:  
Ex (location): The president is **in** the White House.  
Ex (description): The president is **in** trouble with the media.  
Ex (description): The president owns suits **in** four different colors. |
| **Into** | Signals the future movement of an object that will be within or inside of another object:  
Ex: The president is going **into** the White House.  
- This example is very similar to the first example using the word **to**; however, they have different meanings. **To** implies that the president is currently on his way to his destination; **into** implies that the president is currently entering the building. |
| **With** | Describes things being together:  
Ex: The president had lunch **with** the first lady. |
| **Within** | Can signal objects are inside a physical space (location) or occurrences in a span of time:  
Ex (location): There are 132 rooms **within** the White House’s walls.  
Ex (time): The president replies to letters he receives **within** a month. |
| **At** | Can signal...  
Location - where something is located:  
Ex: The president attended the meeting **at** the White House.  
Destination - where something is going:  
Ex: The president’s helicopter is going to land **at** the White House.  
Direction - which way something is going:  
Ex: The woman lunged **at** the president, but the Secret Service stopped her.  
- The verbs **glance**, **laugh**, **smile**, **stare**, and **look** are often followed by the preposition **at** |
| **For** | Can show a length of time or describe a specific object:  
Ex (time): The president will be in China **for** one week.  
Ex (description): The president looked **for** his favorite pen.  
- The verbs **hope**, **look**, **wait**, **watch**, and **wish** are often followed by the preposition **for** |
| **Of** | Describes possession or is used with a verb to introduce an object:  
Ex (possession): The issue was brought to the attention **of** the president.  
- This ‘**of**’ signifies that the attention belongs to the president.  
Ex (introduction): The president approved **of** Congress’ new bill.  
- The preposition ‘**of**’ in the above sentence precedes the object ‘Congress’ new bill’ and shows the relations between the president and the object.  
- The verbs **approve**, **consist**, **smell**, **dream**, and **think** are often followed by the preposition **of** |

**Works Consulted:**  
Purdue University Online Writing Lab (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/); Azusa Pacific University Writing Center (https://apu.edu/writingcenter/); Doing Grammar (Morenberg)
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Purdue University Online Writing Lab (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/); Azusa Pacific University Writing Center (https://apu.edu/writingcenter/); Doing Grammar (Morenberg)