

Prepositions after expressions

Introduction



Jack is the HR manager. He's responsible **for** recruiting new employees.

Uses

We often use prepositions after verbs and adjectives and as a part of fixed expressions and phrasal verbs. Here are some examples we can use to talk about work:

Expression	Preposition	Examples
to be responsible	for	Kim is responsible for quality control.
to be in charge	of	Tony's in charge of accounts and payroll.
to be involved	in/with	Michelle's involved in/with the new e-learning project.
to be qualified	as for	Teri is qualified as a doctor but not as a surgeon. [job title] Larry was over qualified for the job.
to report	to	Chloe reports to Bill. [he's her boss]
to consist	of	David's department consists of one manager, an assistant and three technicians.
to work	as in for	Sherry works as a personal assistant. [job title] Nina works in advertising. [general e.g. education, finance] George works for a big engineering company. [employer]

to specialise	in	Audrey's company specialises in telecommunications.
to deal	with in	Wayne and his team deal with all our travel arrangements. Karen's company deals in fruit and vegetables.
to take care	of	Edgar takes care of hospitality and catering.
to look	after	Morris looks after our overseas investments.
to qualify	as	After studying for three years, Aaron qualified as a marine engineer.

Note that

1. 'responsible' is an adjective, not a noun, so:

I'm a responsible of IT. ❌

I'm an IT manager. ✔️

2. 'specialise' is a verb and 'specialist' is a noun so:

I'm specialise/specialised in pharmaceutical research. ❌

I specialise **in** pharmaceutical research. ✔️

I'm a specialist **in** pharmaceutical research. ✔️

3. Sometimes, more than one preposition is possible. There might be no difference in meaning or a subtle difference.

For example:

He's involved **in** local politics. [he participates in activities related to politics]

He's involved **with** a campaign for more recycling. [suggests an emotional link]

She's involved **with** someone in the accounts department. [in a personal relationship.]

If you are not sure which preposition to use, look in a good dictionary. And when you learn a new verb or adjective, try to learn the correct preposition at the same time. You will remember it better in an example sentence.

Feelings

We use adjectives to talk about how we feel and we need prepositions if we want to give extra information. Here are some examples:

Adjective	Preposition	Examples
afraid	of	Paul's afraid of spiders.
angry	about [something] with [someone] at/with [someone]...for + gerund	Ethan's angry about the new regulations. Allison's angry with Olivia. Martha was angry at/with Charles for lying to her.
annoyed	about [something] with [someone] at/with [someone]...for + gerund	Lynne's annoyed about the delay. Mike's annoyed with Noah. Nadia's annoyed at Ryan for not believing her.
anxious	about	Curtis is anxious about the situation.
excited	about	James is excited about his promotion.
happy	with about	Tom's happy with the results and his team's performance. [satisfied] Kayla's really happy about her new job. [feeling pleasure or contentment]
interested	in	Janis is interested in new technology.
nervous	about	Adam's nervous about his interview.
proud	of	Renée is proud of everyone in her team.

satisfied	with	Chase wasn't satisfied with the service they provided.
sorry	about for	I'm sorry about all the problems you're having. Cole feels sorry for Dana because she lost her job.
worried	about	Paul's worried about losing his job.

Other expressions



"Do you enjoy listening **to** the radio?"
"It depends **on** the kind of programme."

We need to use prepositions after some verbs and expressions when we add information.
For example:

We're **waiting for** a train.
They **laughed at** the joke.

There was a misunderstanding **about** the meeting room.
We didn't get a response **to** our complaint.

Note that

1. The verbs in the above examples are **not phrasal verbs**. They only need a preposition if we add extra information. Unlike phrasal verbs, they can also be used alone:

We're waiting.
They laughed.

1. Some phrasal verbs are also followed by a preposition when adding information. For example:

We're **running out of** paper.
 After the break, we'll **go on with** our discussion.

Here are some more examples of prepositions after verbs and expressions. If you are not sure which preposition to use, look in a good dictionary. And when you learn new expressions, try to learn the correct preposition at the same time. You will remember it better in an example sentence.

sb = somebody/someone
 sth = something

Expression	Preposition	Examples
adjust	to	We need to adjust to the new situation.
agree	to with sb about/on sth	The team agreed to the revised working hours. The team agreed with the boss about working longer hours. They agree on most topics but disagree on the question of working hours.
apologise	to sb/for sth	He apologised to the chairman for interrupting.
argue	with sb/ about/over sth	The team argued with the boss about working longer hours. We argued over where to go on holiday.
be aware	of	Andy wasn't aware of the company's safety regulations.
be capable	of	Elaine is capable of solving any problem.
be convinced	of by	Edwin isn't convinced of the importance of this project. He isn't convinced by anyone's arguments. Note that 'of' and 'by' are not used in the same way. We use 'by' in a passive way. For example, we are convinced 'by' an argument or 'by' the results of a survey or experiment. That is to say, the argument or results convince us 'of' something: I was convinced by the conclusions in the report of the necessity to make some changes.

be/get married	to	Emma's married to a doctor and her sister Samantha's getting married to a dentist.
be made	of from by	Malcolm's shoes are made of leather. Wine is made from grapes. [there's a transformation] The car was made from the strongest materials available. [components] The cake is made by beating eggs and sugar. [method]
belong	to	Tony belongs to the Climbers' Club. [is a member] This book belongs to Robin. [possession]
benefit	from	Jim benefited from more exercise.
blame	sb for sth sth on sb	Sue blamed Ben for their late arrival. Sue blamed their late arrival on Ben.
borrow	(sth) from sth/sb	Kate borrowed £500 from her parents.
complain	to sb/ about sth	We are going to complain to the manager about the service.
cope	with	We're not coping with the crisis.
depend	on	The decision to move to a new office depends on the cost. She depends on him for honest advice. [different meaning of 'depend' = 'to rely']
describe*	sth/sb to sb	She described her new boyfriend to her colleagues.
discuss	sth with sb	They discussed the plans with us. [Do not use 'about' with this verb because 'discuss' = 'talk about']

explain*	sth to sb	He explained the problem to his team.
hear	about	<p>Did you hear about the traffic problems? - lots of people are going to be late. [receive information on a topic]</p> <p>Note that there are two phrasal verbs which might be confused with this:</p> <p>I've never <u>heard of</u> chili-flavoured ice-cream! [have knowledge of sth or sb]</p> <p>Did you <u>hear from</u> Keira when she was on holiday? [receive a phone call, email etc.]</p>
invest	in	The company invested in some new IT equipment.
invite	sb to sth	Let's invite the new employees to lunch.
participate	in	I'd like everyone to participate in the debate.
provide	sb with sth sth for sb	<p>We provided the delegates with agenda.</p> <p>We provided an agenda for the delegates.</p>
recommend*	sth to sb	They recommended a new Italian restaurant to us.
recover	from	<p>Ian's recovering from his illness.</p> <p>Our company is recovering from the losses we suffered last year.</p>
rely	on	Can I rely on you to finish this by Friday?
reply	to	I need to reply to three emails this afternoon.
respond	to	Did they respond to our request?
return	sth to sb	I returned the component to the manufacturer because it was faulty.

say	(sth) to sb	I said to him that I wanted the report by Friday. He said something to me about the report.
talk	to sb about sth/sb with sb [mostly US]	They talked to the architects about the plans. I'm not talking to Ian at the moment - I'm so angry with him. She's always talking about her boyfriend. We need to talk with the manager about this.
tell	sb about sth	The suppliers told us about the delay.
worry	about sth/sb	I'm worried about Natalie; she seems unhappy.

Note that

1. People often make mistakes with the verbs marked * above and others that function in a similar way. This is the correct way to use these verbs:

He explained us the problem. ❌	He explained the problem (to us). ✓
Can you describe me the car? ❌	Can you describe the car (to me)? ✓
They delivered the company the parcel. ❌	They delivered the parcel (to the company). ✓
She demonstrated the audience the new model. ❌	She demonstrated the new model (to the audience). ✓
	Note that if it is obvious from the context, it isn't necessary to mention ' to sb'.

However, there are verbs with two correct structures. Here are some examples:

He gave David the report.

Or

He gave the report **to** David/him.

I'll send you the information as soon as possible.

Or

I'll send the information (**to** you) as soon as possible.

She showed the audience the new model.

Or

She showed the new model (**to** the audience).

2. We do not use 'to' in English with 'ask sb' or 'answer sb or sth':

I asked **to** my assistant why she was late. ❌

I asked my assistant why she was late. ✔️

Can I ask **to** you a question? ❌

Can I ask you a question? ✔️

She answered **to** all his questions. ❌

He doesn't like answering his emails. ✔️

Making comparisons

Note the different prepositions with these expressions:

Japan is different **from/to/than** Germany.

'from' - the most common.

'to' - used more in the UK than the US.

'than' - used more in the US than the UK.

My car is the same **as** yours.

This building is similar **to** that one.

See also **gerunds and infinitives** and **phrasal verbs**.

To depend on

'To depend' is conjugated in the same way as other verbs and is followed by 'on' plus a noun:

It depends **on** the weather. ✔️

It's depend **of** the weather. ❌

We're going to use either the boardroom or the conference room - it'll depend **on** the number of people who come.

For me, getting to work on time in my last job always depended **on** the traffic.
Depending **on** my workload, I'd like to see you next week.

Note that the preposition isn't always necessary. Here are some guidelines:

With these words		Examples
If	No preposition	"Shall we go out tomorrow?" "It depends on if it rains or not."
Whether	The preposition is possible but not necessary	"Shall we go out tomorrow?" "It depends (on) whether it rains or not."
What, when, where, which, why, who, how	The preposition is possible but not necessary	"Shall we go out tomorrow?" "It depends (on) where you want to go and what you want to do."

Expressions with in, on, and at

These prepositions can be used in expressions which are not about time, physical places or movement. Here are some examples:

Preposition	Use/expression	Examples
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in	in a film/a book	Robert de Niro is in comedies as well as gangster movies. I love the characters in <i>Lord of the Rings</i> .
	in love	They fell in love at first sight.
	in time	We didn't arrive in time to see Richard at the party - he left before we got there.
	in bed	At weekends, he stays in bed till 10.00.
	in general	He's occasionally late for meetings but, in general, he's quite reliable.
on	on the phone	Sorry, he can't see you; he's on the phone to a client.
	on a number	Could you ask him to call me back on 020 7513 0513 <input type="text" value="x"/> 020 7513 0513? [at + phone number in US]
	on duty	I'll be on duty at the hospital until 8 o'clock.
	on tv/radio	Some people think there's too much violence on tv. The news is on at 9 o'clock.
	on a cd/dvd	I think you'll like the songs on this cd. I missed the last James Bond film at the cinema so I'm going to watch it on dvd.
	on a hard drive	Don't worry - all the information is stored on the hard drive.
	on the internet/a website	Some children spend too much time on the internet. There's a lot of useful information on our website. I read it on Wikipedia.
	on time	I want to start the meeting on time so please don't be late.

at	at once	Let's start at once - we don't have much time.
	at ease	I like the new manager. I felt at ease when I met him.
	at first	At first, the new system was confusing but it's easy now.
	at last	We waited an hour for the bus. When it arrived at last, it was full!
	at all	We don't have any more printer paper at all. I don't understand the instructions at all.

See also [phrasal verbs](#), [prepositions of place](#) and [get](#).

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