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Prepositions of place

Introduction



The family is sitting on a bench in the garden.

Grandpa is on the left and mum and dad are at the back. Grandma is in the middle, between the children. The dog is on the right.

Prepositions of place

These prepositions give us information about where something is located. The following tables give some guidelines and examples but you may hear some variations depending on sentence structure, context and regional variations.

In, on, at

Uses Examples

in	An enclosed space	in a box, a bag, a room, a cupboard, a cup
	Towns, cities, states, countries, continents etc.	in Birmingham, Kent, California, Japan, Asia
	Other large areas	
	Roads	in the countryside, a neighbourhood, a district, a park, a car park, a garden, the world
	Pictures and documents	in a street, a road, an avenue, the High Street, Bingley Road [UK]
	Some (smaller) forms of transport	in a picture, a photo, a painting, a report, an email, a contract, a newspaper, a magazine a book, a film
		in a car, a taxi, a helicopter, an open boat
on	A surface - horizontal or vertical	on the table, the wall, a shelf, a screen, a plate, a face, a head, page 2, the front cover of the book, the menu
	Transport and travel	on a bus, train, a boat, a ship, a flight, a trip, a journey, a picnic, a bike ride, a break, holiday
	Some locations	on the left, the right, the side, the coast, the beach, the 2 nd floor on an island, a farm, a college campus on a road/street/avenue etc. [mainly US]
		on a motorway, the High Street, Oxford Street [i.e. main roads]
on (the) top of	At the highest point of something tall or high	on top of a cupboard, wardrobe, a hill, a mountain
	'	

at	Some locations that are buildings	at the cinema, the theatre, the pub, a restaurant, work, home, school, university
	Some other locations	•
		at the beach, the lake
	A point on a journey	
		at a junction, traffic lights, a corner, a bus stop
	An address	
		at 88 Bingley Road, 10 Downing Street
	Positions	
	. 333	at the back, the front, the top, the bottom, the end

Other prepositions of place

	Uses	Examples
above	Higher than	Our plane is now above the clouds.
×		Let's put the shelf on this wall above the TV.
Under	Directly below	The cat's under the table.
×		
Opposite	On the other side of	I sat opposite James at the meeting.
×	something	The bank is opposite the station.
Near	A short distance	"Is the hotel near the station?"
×	from	"Yes, it's just a 5-minute walk away."
		We live near the sea. [up to a few km away]

next to	Adjacent to, at the side of [closer than near]	We live next to the sea. [a few metres away - we can see it] I sit next to Jane at work.
behind ×	At the back of	The car park is behind the shopping centre.
in front of	Just ahead of or close to the front part of something	The shopping centre is in front of the car park. There's a statue in front of the fountain.
around	On every side or in a circular way Just past a corner, after turning it 'Near', in this area	They sat around a table. There are lots of restaurants around the square. Where's the station; is it far? No, it's around the next corner. Is there a station around here?
between ×	Having something on each side	The bank is between a supermarket and a book shop. My desk is between Harry's and Marie's.
From	A point of origin	He lives in London now but he's from the north of England.

'In' and 'out'

As adverbs, these can be used alone to mean 'here' or 'not here':

"Can I speak to Jack, please?"

"Sorry, he's not in today. Can I take a message?" [not at work]

I'm the only person at home today. Everyone else is out. [not at home]

We're going out later, maybe to the cinema; we're not sure yet.

I didn't hear you come in last night; what time was it?

See also Adverbs of time and place.



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