

# Prepositions of place, direction, movement

## Introduction



Walk **through** Victoria Tower Gardens, go **across** Lambeth Bridge and **around** the roundabout **towards** Lambeth Palace.

## Prepositions of movement

Prepositions of place indicate where something is and others tell us about movement from one place to another.

He's **at** work. [place]

He's going **to** work. ✓ [movement]

Some prepositions can perform both functions:

The bank is **across** the road. [place]

We walked **across** the road. [movement]

Here are some more examples:

Uses		Examples
<b>onto</b> [also 'on to']	Resulting in being 'on'	They got <b>onto</b> the train. We loaded the goods <b>onto</b> the truck.
<b>over</b>	To go higher than To cross something	We flew <b>over</b> the mountain. We went <b>over</b> the river/the road/the bridge.

<b>across</b>	With a verb like 'go' to mean 'to cross'	We went <b>across</b> the river/the road/the bridge. We walked <b>across</b> the square to get to the cathedral.
<b>into</b>	Resulting in being 'in'  Resulting in being in direct contact with something	They got <b>into</b> the car. Put the files <b>into</b> that cabinet, please.  He wasn't concentrating and he walked <b>into</b> the door.
<b>out of</b>	Resulting in being 'out'	They got <b>out of</b> the car. He threw it <b>out of</b> the window.
<b>inside</b>	Resulting in being in an enclosed space	Go <b>inside</b> the station and wait for me there; I won't be long.
<b>outside</b>	Resulting in being not 'in' but 'near' an enclosed space	He went <b>outside</b> the building to smoke.
<b>through</b>	Moving into one side and out of another  Moving around in or from one side to another	You need to go <b>through</b> this door and <b>through</b> two offices to get to the canteen.  We walked <b>through</b> the park/forest/market.
<b>up</b>	From a lower to a higher part of something  To go further	We walked <b>up</b> the hill and found a nice café.  We went <b>up</b> the street/road/river/beach.
<b>down</b>	From a lower to a higher part of something  To go further	The children ran <b>down</b> the hill/the stairs.  We went <b>down</b> the street/road/river/beach.

<b>around</b> <b>round [mostly UK]</b>	<b>To go to several places in an area</b>  <b>To go in an approximately circular direction</b>	<b>He travels <b>around</b> the world with his job.</b>  <b>Go <b>round</b> the next corner and you'll see the post office.</b>
<b>along</b>	<b>To move in a constant direction</b>	<b>We drove <b>along</b> the motorway for 40 miles.</b> <b>I love walking <b>along</b> the beach at night.</b>
<b>past</b>	<b>To go further than something</b>	<b>You need to go <b>past</b> the bank and turn left.</b>
<b>from</b>	<b>Beginning a journey</b>	<b>We're coming <b>from</b> Heathrow.</b> <b>I get home <b>from</b> work at 7.00.</b>
<b>to</b>	<b>Reaching a destination</b>  <b><b>Note that</b> with the verb 'to arrive', we use 'at' or 'in':</b>	<b>They're getting a taxi <b>to</b> the airport and flying <b>to</b> Barcelona.</b> <b>I go <b>to</b> bed at 11.00.</b>  <b>We arrived <b>at</b> the party/airport or <b>in</b> London/England etc.</b>
<b>towards [UK]</b> <b>toward [US]</b>	<b>To go in the direction of [might not be destination]</b>	<b>Drive <b>towards</b> the town centre and turn left at the next traffic lights.</b>
<b>off</b>	<b>To move down or away from</b>	<b>Get your feet <b>off</b> the table.</b> <b>The dog fell <b>off</b> the bed.</b>
<b>via</b>	<b>To travel to on the way to somewhere else</b>	<b>They flew to Australia <b>via</b> India.</b>
<b>aboard</b>	<b>To board some vehicles</b>	<b>We climbed <b>aboard</b> the boat/plane/helicopter/London Eye.</b>
<b>against</b>	<b>In the opposite direction</b>	<b>Driving <b>into</b> London at night is easy because it's <b>against</b> the commuter traffic.</b>

## 'In'/'into' and 'on'/'onto'

We often use 'in' and 'on' instead of 'into' and 'onto' to indicate movement. It can depend on the verb. For example, both can be used with 'get':

We got **on/onto** the train.  
We got **in/into** the car.

With 'put', we are more likely to use 'in' and 'on':

I put my keys **in** my bag/on the table.

With 'go', 'walk', 'step' or 'jump', we use 'into' or 'onto':

He went **into** the boardroom 5 minutes ago.  
She stepped **onto** the platform.  
The cat jumped **onto** the table.

Sometimes, they are not interchangeable but have different meanings. For example:

We cycle **in** the village. [We cycle when we are **in** the village.]  
We cycle **into** the village. [We cycle when we go **to** the village **from** another location.]

## Expressions for giving directions

We use prepositions of place and movement when giving directions. Here are some examples:

Drive **past** the church and take the first turning **on** the left. Go **along** this road for two miles and stop **at** the traffic lights. Go **over** the bridge and **through** a tunnel. Turn right when you come **to** a big shopping centre. Go **round** the roundabout and take the 3<sup>rd</sup> exit. Drive **towards** the town centre and park **near** the cathedral. Walk **across** the square and you'll find the tourist office **on** the corner **next to** a patisserie. I'll meet you there.

## Other meanings and uses

Some prepositions of place and movement also function as adverbs.

For more information, see **Adverbs of time** and **place** and if in doubt, check in a good dictionary.

Also see **Prepositions with expressions**.



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