

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

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

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

'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 3rd 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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