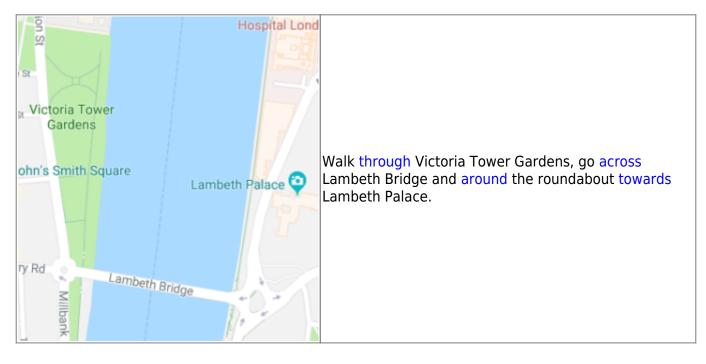
Prepositions of place, direction, movement

Introduction



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'	They got into the car. Put the files into that cabinet, please.
	Resulting in being in direct contact with something	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	You need to go through this door and through two offices to get to the canteen.
	Moving around in or from one side to another	We walked through the park/forest/market.
up	From a lower to a higher part of something	We walked up the hill and found a nice café.
	To go further	We went up the street/road/river/beach.
down	From a lower to a higher part of something	The children ran down the hill/the stairs.
	To go further	We went down the street/road/river/beach.

around round [mostly UK]	To go to several places in an area	He travels around the world with his job.
	To go in an approximately circular direction	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	They're getting a taxi to the airport and flying to Barcelona. I go to bed at 11.00.
	Note that with the verb 'to arrive', we use 'at' or 'in':	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.1

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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