

Lecture Notes:

- Prepositions are words that indicate the relationship of a noun phrase to the rest of the sentence. They allow noun phrases to relate to the rest of the sentence in different ways.
- Traditional grammar also classified prepositions as words that are normally followed by NPs including pronouns.

E.g.

at the store; to the bank; by noon

- If a preposition is not followed by anything, then they are frequently classified as adverbs.

E.g.

He went out/outside.

She has been there before.

- Some prepositions:
 - In the clock
 - On the clock
 - Over the clock
 - Under the clock
 - Beside the clock
 - Below the clock
 - Behind the clock
 - After lunch
 - Before lunch
 - Since lunch
 - Until lunch
 - Of the house
 - Regarding the house
- Relations described by prepositions:

Relation	Preposition	Example of a Prepositional Phrase
Spatial	Behind	Behind the door
Temporal	After	After the party
Instrumental	With	With a pen
Accompaniment	With	With my friend
Attitude	With	With enthusiasm
Means	By	By watching
Agent	By	By the wind

- Some phrasal prepositions:
 - According to Albert
 - Because of Albert
 - By way of Albert
 - In reference to Albert
 - In connection to Albert

- Regardless of Albert
- Together with Albert
- Short of losing
- For the sake of winning
- Except for me
- Up to the top
- Due to his generosity
- The NP preceded by a preposition is called the **object of the preposition**.
PREposition = the position BEFORE the noun phrase.
Only NPs can be the object of a preposition, even though prepositions can take adverb phrases, adjective phrases, and even other prepositional phrases as complements.
E.g.
in the box → “in” is the preposition and “the box” is the NP
until Tuesday → “until” is the preposition and “Tuesday” is the NP
- Prepositions signal a relation between a noun phrase and another phrase like another NP, an ADJP, or a VP.
E.g.
The documents **on** my computer are corrupted.
The door **of** the house is red.
Jing is happy **for** me.
We danced **around** the kitchen.

The bolded words are the prepositions and the underlined words are the NP, ADJP or VPs.

- While many prepositions can take NP complements, some can take adverb phrases, adjective phrases, and even other prepositional phrases as complements.
E.g.
I didn't know until [recently]. [AdvP]
They took him for [dead]. [AdjP]
He emerged from [behind the curtain]. [PP]
- Some sentences are ambiguous because the prepositional phrase can either modify an NP or the predicate.
E.g. Can you explain the ambiguity in this sentence?
He ate the cookies on the counter.

The 2 meanings of the sentence are:

1. He ate the cookies that were placed on the counter.
 2. He ate the cookies while he was on the counter.
- A prepositional phrase (PP) must contain a preposition and a noun phrase.
E.g.
With my friend → With (P) + my friend (NP)
 - Many words that function as prepositions can function as adverbs as well. Remember that prepositions are always followed by their object (an NP). Adverbs occur alone.
E.g.
They were running around **the house**. (P)
They were running around. (Adv)
The plane flew over **the trees**. (P)
The plane flew over. (Adv)

- English has many **phrasal verbs** formed through the combination of a verb and a **verb particle**.

E.g.

Bob **looked** up the definition.

Mary **turned** in early.

They **blackened** out for a few minutes.

Note: The bolded words are the verbs and the underlined words are the verb particles.

Note: When asked to list the verb particles, we just list “up” from “looked up” or “in” from “turn in” or “out” from “blackened out”.

- The meaning of the phrasal verb usually isn't entirely predictable based on the individual meanings of the verb and the particle.
- The differences between prepositions and verb particles:
 1. **Meaning.** The verb particle and the verb form a unit of meaning while the preposition forms a unit of meaning with its object.

E.g.

He [ran up] the bill = to increase the cost (In this case, “up” is a verb particle.)

He ran [up the hill] = to the top (In this case, “up” is a preposition.)

2. **Mobility.** If the phrasal verb takes an object (it is followed by an NP), the particle can be moved to a position following the pronoun form of the object. However, you cannot do this with prepositions.

E.g.

He **ran up** the bill = He **ran** it **up**. (Phrasal verb)

He ran **up the hill** ≠ He ran **it up**. (Preposition)

- Some verb particles are identical in form to adverbs. Here's how we can tell the difference between the two:
 1. **Omission.** Adverbs can be optional in a sentence, while verb particles never are. If the word can be omitted and the sentence still preserves its main meaning, then the word is an adverb.

E.g.

At the lights, we should turn **in** = At the lights we should turn. (Here, “in” is an adv)

At 10pm, we should turn **in** ≠ At 10pm we should turn. (Here, “in” is a verb particle)

2. **Question.** We can often ask a question about an adverbial modifier (where, when, why, how, how many, how long, how much...?) but we can never ask questions about particles.

E.g.

Tom went **down** to see what all the noise was about. → Where did Tom go? Down.

Tom wouldn't back **down**. → You can't ask “Where wouldn't Tom back?”

- Identify Between Prepositions, Verb Particles and Adverbs:

	Preposition	Particle	Adverb
Meaningful unit with NP?	Yes	No	No
Meaningful unit with V?	No	Yes	No
Mobility?	No	Yes (Pronoun)	Yes (Beginning/End)
Omission?	No	No	Yes
Question?	No	No	Yes

Textbook Notes:

- **Prepositions:**
- A **preposition** is a word that signals the grammatical relationship between words and phrases within a clause. Prepositions relate a noun phrase to other phrases in the clause. Prepositions may add information of the kind provided by adverbs (time, place and manner).
- The presence of a preposition signals the fact that a noun phrase is coming. This means that prepositions occur before noun phrases. The preposition and the noun phrase that follows form a phrase that is called a **prepositional phrase (PP)**. The head of a prepositional phrase is a preposition. The noun phrase that comes after a preposition is called **object of the preposition**.
- Prepositions can be followed by an entire sentence or clause. When followed by a clause, they are called **subordinating conjunctions**, and they are not prepositions anymore.
E.g.
She left **after** [you promised to help].
Here, 'after' is not a preposition since it is followed by the clause [you promised to help].
- Prepositions are invariant. That is they do not take different inflectional forms.
- While many prepositions can take NP complements, some can take adverbs, adjectives, and even other PPs as their complement.
E.g.
I didn't know **until** [recently]. [recently: AdvP]
They took him **for** [dead]. [dead: AdjP]
He emerged **from** [behind the curtain]. [behind the curtain: PP]
- Prepositional phrases can also be the complements of verbs.
E.g.
I put it [in the drawer].
He gave them [to the office].
- While many prepositions denote relationships in space and time, some prepositions have special grammatical uses.
"By" introduces the agent in a passive clause.
E.g.
The book was written by the author.
"Of" expresses possession or relatedness.

E.g.

The top of the mountain. = The mountain's top.

- Traditional grammarians often criticize sentences like the following, which end in a preposition.

E.g.

Incorrect Version	Correct Version
What was she referring to?	To what was she referring?
Who did they vote for?	For whom did they vote?

This is a prescriptive rule that some grammarians follow. However, this is a prescriptive rule which may not be followed in informal speech.

- **Prepositional Phrases:**

- Prepositional phrases may:

1. Function adverbially (modify the verb of the clause).
2. Function adjectively (modify a noun phrase).

Note: Prepositional phrases that function adjectively immediately follow the NP they modify.

- As mentioned above, prepositions may function adverbially. I.e. They add information about time, place and manner the way adverbs do.

E.g.

1. The kid stuck his gum **under the desk**. (place: modifying the verb 'stuck')
2. The party starts **after midnight**. (time: modifying the verb 'start')
3. You are reading this section **with enthusiasm**. (manner: modifying the verb 'reading')

Note: In the above examples, the underlined word(s) are the verb phrases and the bolded words are the prepositional phrases.

In this case, they are similar to adverbs. As a result, they are called **adverbial modifiers**.

- Prepositional phrases may also function adjectively. I.e. They modify noun phrases the way adjectives modify nouns.

E.g.

The car **with the broken window** is mine.

Here, the prepositional phrase 'with the broken window' is modifying/describing the noun phrase 'the car'. Therefore, we say, this prepositional phrase functions adjectively or is an **adjectival modifier**.

- **Ambiguous Sentences:**

- Consider the sentence:

Did you eat the cookies **on the counter**?

There are 2 possible meanings to this sentence:

1. 'on the counter' is modifying or describing the noun phrase 'the cookies'. Therefore, we say this prepositional phrase functions adjectively or is an adjectival modifier. In this case, the sentence means: Did you eat the cookies that were placed on the counter?
2. 'on the counter' is modifying or describing the verb 'eat'. Therefore, we say this prepositional phrase functions adverbially or is an adverbial modifier. In this case,

the cookies were not placed on the counter. The action of eating happened on the counter.

- **Prepositions versus Verb Particles:**

- Some prepositions function as verb particles. This means that they form a meaningful unit with the verb.

E.g.

He **looked** the number **up**.

He **looked up** the number.

In the above example, 'up' is not a preposition but a verb particle which forms a unit with the verb 'look'. The verb and its particle 'look up' mean 'search'.

- Notice that the same isn't possible with non-particle prepositions.

E.g.

He went [up the road]. (Correct)

*He went the road up. (Incorrect)

In the above example, 'up' is a preposition and forms a unit with the noun phrase 'the road' instead. It does not form a meaningful unit with the verb 'go'.

- One important restriction on particles is that they can't occur between the verb and an object when the object of the verb is a pronoun. They can only occur between the verb and an object when the object is a full NP.

E.g.

With a full NP:

She **took off** [her hat].

She **took** [her hat] **off**.

With a pronoun:

*She took off it. (Incorrect)

She took it off. (Correct) → If the NP is a pronoun, then it must be verb + pronoun + verb particle

- **Summary:**

- Sometimes a word can be a preposition in one context but an adverb in another context. To distinguish between the two, we need to look for a noun phrase. If there is a noun phrase, that word is a preposition. If not, it **may** be an adverb.
- Some verbs are two-part verbs. They consist of a verb and an element which is called a **verb particle**.

E.g.

Turn in=turn + particle 'in'

Give up= give + particle 'up'

Turn on= turn + particle 'on'

We call a two-part verb a **phrasal verb**. The verb and its particle form a meaningful unit.

- Verb particles and adverbs are sometimes identical. We need to find a way to distinguish between them. Previously, you learned that adverbs are optional and can be omitted. This does not hold true for verb particles. Verb particles are obligatory as they are essential to the meaning of the phrasal verb.

E.g.

Please turn on the radio.

Please turn the radio.

When we omit the particle 'on', the meaning of the sentence changes. Therefore, 'on' is a verb particle.

- One of the main characteristics of the verb particles is their **mobility**. Verb particles are mobile.

E.g.

I looked up the address. → I looked it up (particle movement).

Here, we have replaced the object noun phrase 'the address' with the pronoun 'it'. Then we have moved the particle after the object pronoun 'it'. This process is called **particle movement**.

Note: Particle movement is optional.

Optional particle movement: I looked up the address. OR I looked it up.

Optional particle movement: They put out the fire. OR They put it out.

Particle movement becomes obligatory when the object of the sentence is a pronoun as in I looked it up. We cannot say *I looked up it. In this case, we need to shift away the verb particle from the verb to a position after the personal pronoun 'it'. It is optional when the object of the verb is a noun phrase. However, it is obligatory when the object is a pronoun.

Note: With particle movement, we must change the NP to it/them.

E.g.

1. Linda took out the trash. → Linda took it out.

2. I brought in the mail. → I brought it in.

- **To test prepositions, verb particles, and adverbs, ask yourself:**

1. Does it form a meaningful unit with NP? **Yes** → **It's a preposition**.

2. Does it form a meaningful unit with the verb? **Yes** → **It's a verb particle**.

3. Is it mobile? **Yes** → **Verb particle**. Remember how particles are mobile when we replace the object of the sentence with a pronoun or when the object of the sentence is a pronoun. See above.

4. **Adverbs** can be mobile in specific contexts. You can move them to the beginning or the end of the sentence.

5. Can it be omitted? **Yes** → **It's an adverb**.

6. Can you ask a question? **Where? When? How?** → **It's an adverb**.