

Prepositions Have Multiple Meanings and They Can Also Act as Adverbs and Conjunctions

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Abstract

A preposition is a word that is used before a noun or pronoun and it relates that noun or pronoun to another word in the sentence. These prepositions have multiple meanings. A preposition can be used in a sentence with a particular meaning; the same preposition can be used in other sentences with different meanings. Their form is the same, but they are used as prepositions for various purposes. Besides, most of the prepositions are also used as either adverbs or conjunctions or both. This fact generally goes unnoticed by ordinary readers of English text. This paper aims to establish this fact by enlisting prepositions with multiple meanings and also shows that the same prepositions can also be used either as adverbs or conjunctions.

Keywords: Preposition, Adverb and Conjunction

This paper basically aims to highlight the fact that prepositions have various meanings and most of them can also be used as adverbs and a few of them also function as conjunctions. While reading English text in books and newspapers, I observed this fact and later on explored this phenomenon and found this to be true.

Occasionally, reading the English text, I found prepositions in the sentence which did not function like a preposition. Having examined carefully, it was discovered/learned that they performed the function of an adverb. A few of them also function as a conjunction. To verify my

hypothesis, I took the help of Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 9th Edition, and investigated the uses of prepositions. I read prepositions thoroughly. I learnt that prepositions have multiple meanings despite having the same form; the same words are often also used as adverbs or conjunctions or sometimes both. In this paper, a large number of prepositions have been enumerated alphabetically with their various meanings; it has also been pointed out if they can also be used as adverbs and conjunctions. An ordinary reader of English text book does not pay attention to these nuances.

The paper begins with the analysis of prepositions starting with letter A.

A

About, as a preposition, has various meanings. It has been explained below with examples. It can also be used as an adverb with numerous meanings.

**About
Proposition**

I on the subject of somebody or something, in connection with somebody or something
I have no information about the robbery.

There is nothing that you can do about it now.

2 in many directions in a place, here and there

The visitors wandered about the town for an hour or so.

He looked about the room.

3 next to a place or person, in the area mentioned

She is somewhere about the office.

Sheetal lives about my office.

Adverb

1 a little more or less than, a little before or after (approximately)

Kamal waited about an hour.

He arrived about 10 o'clock.

2 in many directions; here and there

The children were rushing about in the garden.

3 in no particular order, in various places

Her books were lying about on the floor.

4 doing nothing in particular

People were standing about on the road.

Children were roaming about in the garden.

Across, as a preposition, has many meanings. It has been explained below with examples. It can also be used as an adverb and conjunction with different meanings.

Across

Preposition

1 from one side to the other side of something

He walked across the field.

Where is the nearest bridge across the river?

2 on the other side of something

There is a bank across the street.

I saw a boat across the field.

3 in every part of a place, group of people etc.

His family is scattered across the country.

This view is common across all the sections of the society.

Adverb

1 from one side to the other side

It's too wide. We cannot swim across.

The yard measures about 50 feet across.

After can be used as a preposition with multiple meanings. It has been explained below with examples. It can also be used as an adverb with numerous meanings.

After

Preposition

1 later than something, following something on time

We will leave after lunch.

After winning the prize, she became famous overnight.

2 ... after ... used to show that something happens many times or continuously

I have told you time after time not to do that.

It rained heavily day after day and the crop was destroyed because of it.

3 behind somebody when they have left, following somebody

He ran after her with the book.

Shut the door after her.

4 next to and following somebody or something in order or importance

Your name comes after mine in the list.

Sujeet was in the queue after me.

The vice president paid tribute to the martyrs after the president.

5 As a result of or because of something that has happened

I will never forgive him after what he said.

6 Trying to find or catch somebody or something

The police are after him.

He is after a job at your place.

7 In the style of somebody or something

A painting after Goya.

He was dressed after Amitabh Bacchan at the party.

Adverb

1 later in time, afterwards

I could come the next week or the week after.

And they all lived happily ever after.

Conjunction

1 at a time later than something

I will call you after I have spoken to them.

I got a call after the interview was over.

Along can be used as a preposition with multiple meanings. It has been explained below with examples. It can also be used as an adverb.

Along

Preposition

1 from one end to or towards the other end of something

They walked slowly along the road.

I looked along the shelves for the books I needed.

2 in a line that follows the side of something long

Houses have been built along both sides of the river.

3 at a particular point on or beside something long

You will find his office just along the corridor.

Adverb

1 forward

I was just walking along singing to myself.

He pointed out various landmarks as we drove along.

2 with somebody

We are going for a swim. Why don't you come along?

I will be along in a few minutes.

Around can be used as a preposition with multiple meanings. It has been explained below with examples. It can also be used as an adverb.

As is a preposition which is used very often for various purposes. It is also used as an adverb and a conjunction.

As

Preposition

1 used to describe somebody or something appearing to be somebody or something else

The students were dressed as clowns.

The bomb was disguised as a package.

2 used to describe the fact that somebody or something has a particular job or function
She works as a nurse.

I respect him as a doctor.

Use that glass as a vase.

Adverb

1 as ... as... used to describe when you are comparing two people, or situations or two things
She does not play as well as her sister.

He does not earn as much as me.

2 used to say that something happens in the same way
As always, he said little.

The h in honest is silent as h in hour.

Conjunction

1 while something else is happening
He sat watching her as she got ready.

As she grew older she gained confidence.

2 in the way in which
They did as I had asked.

Leave the papers as they are.

3 used to state the reason for something
She may need some help as she is new.
As you were out, I left a message.

4 used to make a comment or to add information about what you have just said
Sneha is very tall as is her mother.

Karan was very quiet as was his mother.

5 used to say that in spite of something being true, what follows is also true
Happy as they were, there was something missing.

Patient as he was, he lost his temper in the end.

At is used as a preposition with multiple meanings. Many examples have been enlisted to make the idea clear. At is not used as a conjunction or an adverb.

Prepositions starting with letter B are analyzed below.

B

Before is a very commonly used preposition. It is used for numerous purposes as a preposition. The same word is also used as an adverb and a conjunction.

Before

Preposition

1 earlier than somebody or something

He arrived before me.

Leave your keys at the reception before departure.

2 used to say that somebody/something is in a position in front of somebody/ something

They knelt before the throne.

Hitesh stood before the judge and begged for mercy.

3 used to say something is facing somebody in the future

The task before us is a daunting one.

The whole summer lay before me.

4 in the presence of somebody who is listening or watching

He was brought before the judge.

Sneha said it before the witnesses.

Adverb

1 at an earlier time; in the past; already

You should have told me so before.

I think we have met before.

Conjunction

1 earlier than the time when

Do it before you forget.

Did she leave a message before she went?

2 until

It may be many years before the situation improves.

Kavita thought about it for many days before she realized the truth.

Behind is also a very commonly used preposition. It is used for numerous purposes as a preposition. The same word is also used as an adverb and a conjunction.

Behind

Preposition

1 at or towards the back of something and often hidden by it or them

Who is the man standing behind Jugal?

The sun disappeared behind the clouds.

2 making less progress than somebody or something
He is behind the rest of the class in reading.

The train is running behind schedule.

3 giving support or approval of somebody or something

She knew that whatever she decided her family was behind her.

The entire organisation was behind his tremendous success.

4 responsible for starting or developing something

What is behind that happy smile?

He was the man behind the plan to build a new hospital.

5 used to say that something is in somebody's past

The accident is behind you now, so try to forget it.

She has ten years' useful experience behind her.

Adverb

1 at or towards the back of somebody or something

She rode off down the road with the dog running behind.

2 in the place where somebody or something was or is

I was told to stay behind after school.

This bag was left behind after the class.

3 late in paying money or completing work

She has fallen behind with the payments.

Kapil always lags behind to complete his homework.

But is used as conjunction very commonly. It can also be used as an adverb and a conjunction.

But

Preposition

1 except, apart from

We had nothing but trouble with this car.

Who but Risa could think of something like that?

Adverb

1 only

I don't think we will manage it. Still, we can but try.

There were a lot of famous people. Lady Gaga and Hugh Jackson, to name but two.

Conjunction

1 used to introduce a word or phrase that contrasts with what was said before
It was not the red one, but blue one.

It is not that he lies exactly, but he does tend to exaggerate.

2 however, despite this

I had asked everybody, but only two people came.

By the end of the day, we were tired but happy.

3 used to introduce a statement that shows that you are surprised or annoyed
But that's not possible!

Here is the money I owe you. But that's not right. It was only \$ 10.

4 except

I had no choice but to sign the contract.

No one was present but Kamal.

Here is an analysis of prepositions starting with letter D.

D

Down is used as a preposition. The same word can also function as an adverb.

Down

Preposition

1 from a high or higher point on something to a lower one

The stone rolled down the hill.

Tears ran down her face.

2 along or towards the direction in which you are facing

He lives just down the street.

There is a bridge a mile down the river from here.

Adverb

1 to or at a lower position or place

She jumped down off the chair.

She bent down to pick up her glove.

2 from a standing or vertical position to a lower or sitting position

He had to go and lie down for a while.

Please sit down.

3 at a lower level or rate

Prices of cars have gone down recently.

We are already two goals down.

Now there is a list of preposition beginning with letter F.

For is a preposition that is used commonly with various meanings. It is also used as a conjunction.

For

Preposition

1 used to show who is intended to use or have something or where something is intended to be kept

There is a letter for you.

It is a book for children.

We got a new table for the dining room.

2 in order to help somebody or something

Can you translate this letter for me?

The soldiers are fighting for their county.

3 concerning somebody or something

They are anxious for her safety.

4 as a representative of others

Kamal spoke for all his brothers.

I am speaking for everyone in the department.

5 in exchange for something

I bought four notebooks for Rs 100.

Copies are available for two dollars each.

6 in order to obtain something

He came to me for advice.

For more information, call this number.

7 used to show purpose or function

I need a pen to write the letter.

I bought a machine for slicing bread.

8 in support of somebody or something

I am for the upgradation of technology.

They voted for independence in the referendum.

Conjunction

1 used to introduce the reason for something mentioned in the previous statement

We listened eagerly, for he brought news of our families.

Sneha asked for money, for she had lost her wallet.

From is used as preposition. It is used to express various purposes. It is not used as an adverb or a conjunction.

Further, this paper examines the prepositions that begin with letter I.

I

In is a preposition that is used very often in English. It can also be used as an adverb.

In

Preposition

1 at a point in a space or area

The students are standing in the street.

My dad read about it in the newspaper.

2 within the shape of something

Kamal was lying in bed.

Leave the key in the box.

3 forming the whole or part of something

There are 31 days in July.

He learns computer twice in a week.

I have sent you all the paintings in the collection.

4 during the period of time

I bought a home in 2009.

There were many great poets in 19th century.

Adverb

1 contained within an object, an area or a substance

The prisoners are locked in.

I cannot have coffee with milk in.

2 into an object, an area or a substance

The peon opened the door and went in.

The boys were playing by the river and one of them fell in.

Here is the analysis of the prepositions beginning with letter O.

O

Of is used as preposition. It does not function as an adverb or a conjunction.

On is a preposition used very often in English. It can also be used as an adverb.

On

Preposition

1 in or into a position covering, touching or forming part of a surface

I saw a picture on a wall.

There is a mark on your skirt.

2 supported by somebody or something

Sheetal was standing on one foot.

Hang that cap on the hook

3 used to show means of transport

My father was on a plane from Delhi.

I saw a woman on a horseback.

4 used to show a day or date

Ravi reached Mumbai on Sunday.

Sharad will visit us on 25 July 2020.

5 immediately after something

On arriving home Kamala had lunch.

Kindly inform to the reception on completion of the task.

6 used to show that somebody belongs to a group, organization

Rohit is not on committee looking into irregularities of fund.

Who is on your side?

7 by means of something, using something

They played a tune on guitar.

The students spoke on phone.

Adverb

1 used to show that something continues

He worked on without a break.

If you want to succeed, keep on hard work.

2 on somebody's body, being worn

Put your coat on.

Mother has not have her glasses on.

3 connected or operating, being used

The tube light was on in the corridor

The television is always on in his office.

This paper has also investigated the prepositions beginning with letter S.

Since is used as preposition, adverb and conjunction.

Since

Preposition

1 From a time in the past until a later past time or until now

Kavita has been off work since Tuesday.

She has been working in a school since 2006.

Adverb

1 from a time in the past until a later past time or until now

Sulabh left home three days ago and we have heard nothing from him since.

The original building has long since been demolished.

Conjunction

1 From a time in the past until a later past time or until now

Reshma has not phoned me since she went to Berlin.

Kamal does his homework on time since he was punished by the class teacher.

2 because, as

Kavita learns very fast since she is very intelligent.

I did not go out yesterday since it was very hot.

Further, the paper analyses the prepositions that begin with letter U.

U

Under is used as preposition very commonly. It is also used as adverb.

Under

Preposition

1 in, to or through a position that is below something

Have you looked under the bed?

She placed her ladder under the window

2 below the surface of something, covered by something

The boat lay under several feet of water.

3 less than

It took us under an hour.

No one under 18 is permitted to buy alcohol.

4 used to say who or what controls manages or governs something

The coinage was reformed under Elizabeth.

The current pandemic situation is being looked after under the supervision of the chief minister.

5 according to an agreement, a law or a system

Under the term of lease, you cannot sublet the flat.

6 experiencing a particular process

The matter is under investigation.

The hotel is still under construction.

Adverb

1 below the surface of water

Sneha took a deep breath and stayed under for more than a minute.

Up is a preposition used very commonly in English. It is also used as adverb

Up

Preposition

1 to or in a higher position somewhere

They climbed up the flight of stairs.

The village is further up the valley.

2 along or further along a road or street

We live just up the road.

There is a cabin up the corridor.

Adverb

1 towards or up in a higher position

He jumped up from the chair.

I pinned the notice up on the wall.

2 to or at a higher level

Kamal turned the volume up.

Prices of onion are still going up.

3 into pieces and parts

Kavita tore the cover up.

How shall we divide up the work?

4 to the place where somebody or something is

A car drove up and she got in.

She went straight up to the door and knocked loudly.

5 so as to be formed and brought together

The government agreed to set up a committee of inquiry.

The principal decided to set up a committee to look into the matter.

6 completely

We ate all the food up.

The stream has dried up.

After going through the content written above, it can be easily understood that prepositions have multiple meanings, and most of the prepositions are also used as adverbs and some of them are also used as conjunctions. Ordinary readers of English language do not understand this fact. This paper will definitely widen the understanding of the readers about preposition and other facets related to it.

Works Cited:

1 Hornby A S. *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*. 8th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Print