

## A Quick Reference Guide from Writing Support Services

<http://www.cuw.edu/Tools/resources/lrc/writingcenter/grammar.html>

### Prepositions Definition

Prepositions are special words that link nouns, pronouns, or words acting as nouns to other parts of the sentence. Prepositional phrases may act as adjectives or adverbs to help clarify a sentence. These short words do not change form. Taking all this into account, prepositions may establish sequences in time, positions in space, or other relationships between ideas.

### Usage

The preposition may be a better choice than adverbs or adjectives depending on your meaning. This is evident in the following example: Instead of saying, *She spoke considerately.*

It might be clearer to say *She spoke with careful consideration.*

The meaning of the two sentences is different. The underlined word is a preposition; "with careful consideration" is the prepositional phrase. The second is a better choice because the sentence conveys the meaning intended. The writer should always keep in mind that too many prepositions might make a sentence unclear.

### Placement

A preposition should be placed before its object. That is, in the phrase "with careful consideration," "with" (the preposition) is placed before "careful consideration" (consideration is the object of the preposition). This keeps these related parts of the sentence as close together as possible. This also means that ending a sentence with a preposition is taboo.

### Punctuation

When beginning a sentence with a prepositional phrase, use a comma after the phrase. Do not, however, separate a prepositional phrase with a colon or semicolon.

Correct *During the show, the animals all sat still.*

Incorrect *The purpose of this paper was for: information and persuasion.*

Here again, the underlined words are prepositions.

### Capitalization in Titles

The general rule when writing titles is this: if the preposition is fewer than five letters, do not capitalize it. However, if the preposition is the first or last word, or the first word after a colon, capitalize it. When documenting APA, only the first word of the title is capitalized. If there is a colon, capitalize only the first word after the colon.

## **Commonly Used Prepositions**

About	Before	Except	Onto	Unlike
Above	Behind	For	Out	Until
Across	Below	From	Outside	Unto
After	Beneath	In	Over	Up
Against	Beside	Inside	Past	Upon
Along	Between	Into	Since	With
Amid	Beyond	Like	Through	Within
Among	By	Near	Throughout	Without
Around	Despite	Of	Till	
As	Down	Off	Toward	
At	During	On	Under	

Many times, a preposition is a word that can tell the position of a bird to a tree.