

24 Common phrases with prepositions

1 Phrases of place

	PHRASE	EXAMPLE
at	at home	I'm usually at home in the evenings.
	at school	The children are at school next week so we can't come.
	at work	Robert's at work now – why don't you call him there?
in	in bed	Teenagers often stay in bed till late.
on	on holiday	Where are you going on holiday this year?
	on business	Melissa's in Rome on business this week. (working there)



We don't use *to* with *home*, *here* or *there*:

~~X I'm tired. I want to go to home now.~~ ✓ I'm tired. I want to go **home** now.

2 Phrases of time

	PHRASE	MEANING	EXAMPLE
at	at first	in the beginning	At first I was unhappy at college but now I really like it.
	at last	after a long time	At last it stopped raining so we went outside.
	at once	immediately	The ambulance arrived almost at once .
	at the same time	together	You can't watch TV and study at the same time .
in	in a hurry	have to do something quickly	I can't talk now. I'm in a hurry .
	in the end	finally	We solved the problem in the end , after a lot of work.
	in time	early enough for something	Make sure you get home in time for dinner.
on	on time	at the right time	The plane left on time .

In time means 'early enough for something':

I didn't arrive **at the station in time** for the six o'clock train, so I had to wait for the next one.

On time means 'at the correct time':

Last year 92 percent of South-East trains left **on time**.

3 Other common phrases

	PHRASE	MEANING	EXAMPLE
by	by chance	you did not plan or expect it	We found this wonderful restaurant by chance .
	by mistake	you did not intend to do it	I sent that email by mistake – I didn't want you to read it.
in	in love	loving someone in a romantic way	My father says that he's still in love with my mother after twenty-five years!
	in public	where everyone can see/hear	I was very nervous the first time I spoke in public .
	in private	where other people can't see/hear	Can we discuss your work in private ?
on	on fire	burning	The motorway was closed because a car was on fire .
	on purpose	deliberately	I didn't get wet on purpose – I fell in the water.
for	for sale	you can buy it	The house at the end of the road is for sale .
out of	out of order	not working	The lift is out of order . We'll have to use the stairs.

Practice

1 Complete the sentences with prepositions.

- 0 Which languages do you study at school in your country?
- 1 Can I talk to you private after the class?
- 2 It's dangerous to drive and talk on a mobile phone the same time.
- 3 I really like the handbag in the window. Is it sale?
- 4 The police found the money chance when they searched the apartment.
- 5 Ahmed travels to Switzerland every month business.
- 6 After nearly an hour, our bus arrived last!

2 GRAMMAR IN USE Complete the story with the correct words and phrases from the box.

at first at once home ~~in a hurry~~ in the end in time on fire

We had a terrible experience a few weeks ago. One evening, a friend of ours had dinner with us, and we drove him to the station after our meal. We were quite late for his train so we left the house (0) in a hurry, and I forgot to turn off the cooker. When we got (1) from the station, the kitchen was (2)! We were shocked (3) but then we called the fire service. They arrived almost (4), and put the fire out. We were lucky that they put the fire out (5) to save our kitchen – there wasn't much damage, so everything was OK (6)

3 Write the sentences again. Replace the underlined words with a common phrase.

- 0 I'm really sorry I took your coat – I didn't do it deliberately.
I'm really sorry I took your coat – I didn't do it on purpose.
- 1 The film seemed very boring in the beginning, but then it got better.
.....
- 2 I'm going to be in Prague for work next week.
.....
- 3 Please make sure that you arrive at the correct time for your appointment.
.....
- 4 If you hear the bell, go to your class immediately.
.....
- 5 The coffee machine isn't working again.
.....

4 GRAMMAR IN USE There are five more mistakes with prepositions in the conversation. Find and correct them.

- | | |
|--|--|
| A Did you get tickets for Radiohead? | A Well, I'm actually by holiday from work that day. I'll meet you to there. |
| B Yes, I did. I had to phone the box office about ten times but I got through in <u>on</u> the end. | B Can you meet me at 6.30? It starts at 8.00 and I want to be there by time – at least an hour before it starts. |
| A That's great! | A Yes, that's fine. I'll drive and park nearby, then I can drive you to home afterwards. |
| B I've got tickets for Friday 15th – I'll be on work that day, so I'll go straight from the office to Wembley Stadium. | B Thanks. That's great. |