Unit 121

At/on/in (time)

A

Compare **at**, **on** and **in**:

- They arrived **at 5 o'clock**.
- They arrived **on Friday**.
- They arrived **in October**. / They arrived **in 1998**.

We use:

at for the time of day
at five o'clock **at 11.45** **at midnight** **at lunchtime** **at sunset** etc.

on for days and dates
on Friday / on Fridays **on 16 May 2009** **on Christmas Day** **on my birthday**

in for longer periods (for example: months/years/seasons)

in October	**in 1998**	**in the 18th century**	**in the past**
in (the) winter	**in the 1990s**	**in the Middle Ages**	**in (the) future**

B

We use **at** in these expressions:

at night	I don't like working **at night**.
at the weekend / at weekends	Will you be here **at the weekend**?
at Christmas	Do you give each other presents **at Christmas**?
at the moment / at present	The manager isn't here **at the moment / at present**.
at the same time	Kate and I arrived **at the same time**.

C

We say:

in the morning(s)	*but*	**on Friday morning(s)**
in the afternoon(s)		**on Sunday afternoon(s)**
in the evening(s)		**on Monday evening(s)** etc.

- I'll see you **in the morning**.
- Do you work **in the evenings**?
- I'll see you **on Friday morning**.
- Do you work **on Saturday evenings**?

D

We do not use **at/on/in** before **last/next/this/every**:

- I'll see you **next Friday**. (*not* on next Friday)
- They got married **last March**.

In spoken English we often leave out **on** before days (**Sunday/Monday** etc.). So you can say:

- I'll see you **on Friday**. *or* I'll see you **Friday**.
- I don't work **on Monday mornings**. *or* I don't work **Monday mornings**.

E

In a few minutes / in six months etc.

- The train will be leaving **in a few minutes**. (= a few minutes from now)
- Andy has gone away. He'll be back **in a week**. (= a week from now)
- They'll be here **in a moment**. (= a moment from now)

You can also say: in six months' **time**, in a week's **time** etc.

- They're getting married in **six months' time**. *or* ... **in six months**.

We also use **in** ... to say how long it takes to do something:

- I learnt to drive **in four weeks**. (= it took me four weeks to learn)

On/in time, at/in the end → Unit 122 **In/at/on** (position) → Units 123–125
In/at/on (other uses) → Unit 127 American English → Appendix 7

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Exercises

121.1 Put in **at**, **on** or **in**.

1 Mozart was born in Salzburg *in* 1756.
2 I've been invited to a wedding ..... 14 February.
3 Electricity prices are going up ..... October.
4 ..... weekends, we often go for long walks in the country.
5 I haven't seen Kate for a few days. I last saw her ..... Tuesday.
6 Jonathan is 63. He'll be retiring from his job ..... two years' time.
7 I'm busy right now, but I'll be with you ..... a moment.
8 My brother is an engineer, but he doesn't have a job ..... the moment.
9 There are usually a lot of parties ..... New Year's Eve.
10 I don't like driving ..... night.
11 My car is being repaired at the garage. It will be ready ..... two hours.
12 My phone and the doorbell rang ..... the same time.
13 Mary and David always go out for dinner ..... their wedding anniversary.
14 It was a short book and easy to read. I read it ..... a day.
15 ..... Saturday night I went to bed ..... midnight.
16 We travelled overnight and arrived ..... 5 o'clock ..... the morning.
17 The course begins ..... 7 January and ends sometime ..... April.
18 I might not be at home ..... Tuesday morning, but I'll be there ..... the afternoon.

121.2 Complete the sentences. Use **at**, **on** or **in** + the following:

the evening	**about 20 minutes**	**~~1492~~**	**the same time**
the moment	**21 July 1969**	**the 1920s**	**night**
Saturdays	**the Middle Ages**	**11 seconds**	

1 Columbus made his first voyage from Europe to America *in 1492* .
2 If the sky is clear, you can see the stars ..... .
3 After working hard during the day, I like to relax ..... .
4 Neil Armstrong was the first man to walk on the moon ..... .
5 It's difficult to listen if everyone is speaking ..... .
6 Jazz became popular in the United States ..... .
7 I'm just going out to the shop. I'll be back ..... .
8 'Can I speak to Dan?' 'I'm afraid he's busy ..... .'
9 Many of Europe's great cathedrals were built ..... .
10 Ben is a very fast runner. He can run 100 metres ..... .
11 Liz works from Monday to Friday. Sometimes she also works ..... .

121.3 Which is correct: **a**, **b**, or **both of them**?

1	a I'll see you on Friday.	b I'll see you Friday.	*both*
2	a I'll see you on next Friday.	b I'll see you next Friday.	*b*
3	a Paul got married in April.	b Paul got married April.	.....
4	a They never go out on Sunday evenings.	b They never go out Sunday evenings.	.....
5	a We often have a short holiday on Christmas.	b We often have a short holiday at Christmas.	.....
6	a What are you doing the weekend?	b What are you doing at the weekend?	.....
7	a Will you be here on Tuesday?	b Will you be here Tuesday?	.....
8	a We were ill at the same time.	b We were ill in the same time.	.....
9	a Sue got married at 18 May 2008.	b Sue got married on 18 May 2008.	.....
10	a He left school last June.	b He left school in last June.	.....

→ Additional exercise 33 (page 321)

LIVEWORKSHEETS