

Chapter 5

PREPOSITIONS, CONJUNCTIONS, AND INTERJECTIONS

Chapter Check-In

- Recognizing prepositions
- Learning the rules for prepositions
- Understanding conjunctions
- Knowing how to use interjections

Prepositions, conjunctions and interjections are the connecting elements in sentences. Finding the link between words is the secret to identifying prepositions. The two most important rules about using prepositions are avoid using excess prepositions and avoid ending sentences with prepositions.

Conjunctions are parts of speech that connect words, phrases, or clauses. There are three types of conjunctions: coordinating, correlative, and subordinating. They are the key to logically constructed sentences.

Interjections are used to express powerful or sudden emotion and are usually not grammatically connected to any other sentence. While there are no formal rules for interjections, they are most effective if used sparingly.

The Preposition

A **preposition** shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun and another noun or pronoun.

The cat *under* the fence.

The cat *between* the fence and the house.

Everyone *except* the girl *in* the blue dress.

A letter *about* us.

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The italicized words in the preceding phrases are prepositions; the underlined words are **objects of the prepositions**. When the object is a pronoun, remember that the pronoun should be in the objective case (see Chapter 3).

Recognizing prepositions

How do you recognize a preposition? It's sometimes not easy. Prepositions aren't as obvious as nouns and verbs. Look for a word that establishes a certain kind of relationship with another word. For example, in the previous phrases, how is *cat* related to *fence*? The cat is *under* the fence. How is *Everyone* related to the *girl*? The *girl* is left out of the group *Everyone*. How is *girl* related to *dress*? She is *in* it. Table 5-1 shows several words commonly used as prepositions.

Table 5-1 Words Commonly Used as Prepositions

about	before	down	off	under
above	behind	during	on	underneath
across	below	except	out	until
after	beneath	for	over	unto
against	beside	from	past	up
along	between	in	since	upon
among	beyond	into	through	with
around	by	like	to	within
at	concerning	of	toward	without

Some prepositions, called **compound prepositions**, are made up of more than one word, such as *according to*, *because of*, *in front of*, *instead of*, *in spite of*, and *next to*.

Confusing use of prepositions

The unnecessary use of prepositions is a common error. Be careful not to use a preposition where it isn't needed.

Where have you been?

NOT Where have you been *at*?

Where is Robert going?

NOT Where is Robert going *to*?

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Also, don't use two prepositions when you need only one.

Don't go *near* the water
 NOT Don't go *near to* the water.

The book fell *off* the table.
 NOT The book fell *off of* the table.

Ending a sentence with a preposition can cause problems. The rule that a sentence should never end with a preposition is no longer strictly enforced. Still, many writers avoid ending sentences with prepositions, which is generally a good idea. But use your own judgment. If you feel ending with a preposition makes a particular sentence more natural, do so and don't worry about it.

It is a comment *to which* I will not respond.
 COMPARED TO It is a comment I will not respond *to*.

I bought a pen *with which* to write.
 COMPARED TO I bought a pen to write *with*.

Defining Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that join or link elements. Like prepositions, they get a job done rather than add excitement to your writing. But choosing the right conjunction makes the logic of your thought clear. For example, which of the following two sentences creates the more logical connection?

I've always disliked history, *and* I have never failed a test.
 I've always disliked history, *but* I have never failed a test.

Because the two clauses suggest contradictory ideas, *but* provides a more logical connection than *and*.

Coordinating conjunctions

The **coordinating conjunctions** are *and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, and *yet*. These conjunctions join words, phrases, or clauses that are grammatically equal in rank.

Words: *Mother and daughter, tea and toast*
 Phrases: We found the Easter eggs *under the couch and in the closet*.
 Clauses: *He likes me, but I don't care*.

Each clause (*He likes me* and *I don't care*) can stand alone. The two clauses are grammatically equal.

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Correlative conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are like coordinating conjunctions except that they come in matched pairs: *either/or*, *neither/nor*, *both/and*, *not only/but also*, and *whether/or*.

Words: *Neither mother nor daughter*

Phrases: We found the Easter eggs *not only under the couch but also in the closet*.

Clauses: *Either you surrender or I shoot*.

For maintaining parallel construction when using correlative conjunctions, see Chapter 7.

Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions join unequal elements. A subordinating conjunction joins a clause that can't stand alone (called a **subordinate** or **dependent clause**) to a clause that can (called an **independent clause**). Clauses are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

We will discontinue research in this area *unless* the results of the experiment are promising.

The clause beginning with *unless* cannot stand alone; it is subordinate to, or dependent on, the independent clause *We will discontinue research in this area*. *Unless* is the subordinating conjunction that links the two clauses.

The train arrived *before* we did.

Before we did is a dependent clause; it cannot stand alone. It depends on the independent clause *The train arrived*. *Before* is the subordinating conjunction that links the clauses.

Table 5-2 includes some words that can act as subordinating conjunctions.

Table 5-2 Words That Can Act as Subordinating Conjunctions

after	before	than	whenever
although	even if	that	where
as	if	though	wherever
as if	in order that	till	while
as long as	provided (that)	unless	
as though	since	until	
because	so (that)	when	

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You may notice that some of these words were also on the list of prepositions. Once again, remember that a word's part of speech depends on its function, not on the word itself. A preposition shows a relationship between words and has an object, whereas a subordinating conjunction joins a dependent clause to an independent one.

The man stood hesitantly *before* the door.

In the preceding sentence, *before* is a preposition; its object is *door*. The preposition shows the relationship between the man and the door.

Before the expedition can begin, the details must be addressed.

Here, *before* is a subordinating conjunction, linking the dependent clause *Before the expedition can begin* to the independent clause *the details must be addressed*.

Using Interjections

Oh! The joy of **interjections!** Interjections, words that express a burst of emotion, are not grammatically related to other elements in a sentence.

Hey! Gadzooks! Oh, no! Bravo! Whoopee!

Curses are also interjections: *Damn!*

Interjections can add a sudden and emotional tone to your writing if they are used judiciously. The good news is that no rules apply to interjections. The bad news is that you should limit your use of them, particularly in formal writing. Even in informal writing the power of interjections will be diluted if they are used too often. Generally, although not always, exclamation points immediately follow interjections.

Ouch! Hurrah! Mercy!

Ah, to be in Paris in the spring!

Chapter Checkout

Q&A

1. Identify the preposition and the object of the preposition in the following sentences.
 - a. Ivy grew between the bricks.
 - b. Within a year, Tom will be an architect.
 - c. The squirrels played beneath my window.

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2. True or False: All of the following sentences are grammatically correct uses of prepositions.
- a. Would you like to come with me?
 - b. Where did you graduate from?
 - c. He lives near by the stream.
 - d. I cannot decide between Libertarians and Democrats.
 - e. I left my glasses beside of my book.
 - f. He is involved by his music.
 - g. Be quiet and listen at the instructions.
 - h. We split the reward among three children.
3. Match the underlined word with the correct conjunction.
- a. We were surprised, yet we laughed. Coordinating
 - b. Whenever she reads, Moesha takes notes. Correlative
 - c. Not only was he cold, but also hungry. Subordinating
4. Underline the interjections in the following passage:

Mary and Lisa were determined to surprise Staci on her birthday. “ Oh Boy! She will never guess what we have planned,” exclaimed Mary. Lisa, who seemed lost in thought, suddenly cried, “Hey! We forgot to order a cake.” “Oh, No!,” Mary gasped.

Answers: 1. a. between, bricks b. within, year c. beneath, window
2. a. True b. False c. False d. True e. False f. False g. False h. True 3. a. Coordinating b. Subordinating c. Correlative 4. Oh, Boy!, Hey!, Oh, No!