

Language Awareness for Key Stage 3

10: Prepositions

Key Terms	Optional Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preposition• Postposition• Case• Article• Pronoun• Adverb• Nominative• Accusative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dative• Ablative• Adposition• Anastrophe• Preposition stranding

- Introduction: Prepositions
 - Today we will take a closer look at prepositions
 - We will see how prepositions interact with case
 - We will also look at the different word orders that appear with prepositions
 - We will see how some languages combine prepositions with articles
 - Finally, we will examine how languages differ in their use of prepositions with pronouns
- Prepositions
 - As you may remember, prepositions are words (e.g. *from, into*) that express a relationship between a noun and another noun, or between a noun and a verb
 - I saw a picture of John
 - I climbed down the ladder
 - Some words can be used either as prepositions or adverbs
 - When they are adverbs, they are not used with a noun
 - I climbed down
- Prepositions and Case
 - You may remember from before that some words have special forms for different cases (e.g. *I* = nominative, me = accusative)
 - As we saw, case can show whether a word is the subject or object of a verb
 - The case of a word can also be determined by prepositions
 - You can see the relationship between case and prepositions in English
 - I talked to them
 - ~~I talked to they~~
 - Prepositions in English always need to be followed by an accusative form
 - They can never be followed by a nominative form
 - Languages that have a greater number of cases may use different cases with different prepositions
 - The choice of case for a given preposition is often connected to more general properties of the cases
 - For example, in German the preposition *zu* ‘to’ takes the dative case
 - Es ist zu Staube geworden
 - ‘It has turned to dust’
 - There is also a similar ‘to’ meaning often present in the use of the dative case with verbs
 - Gib es mir!
 - ‘Give it (to) me!’

- Likewise, the German preposition *anstatt* ‘instead of’ takes the genitive case
 - Sie tranken Wasser anstatt Weines
‘They drank water instead of wine’
- This is related to the possessive use of the genitive case
 - an meiner Statt
‘in my stead’/‘in my place’
- Sometimes a preposition may be used with more than one case, with a difference in meaning
- You can see this in these examples from Latin
 - Cucurri in hortum (accusative)
‘I ran into the garden’
 - Cucurri in horto (ablative)
‘I ran within the garden’
- As you can see, the first example expresses direction, and the second expresses location
- English used to use cases to make the same distinction, in Anglo-Saxon times (a thousand years ago or more)
 - Ic ran in thone geard (accusative)
‘I ran into the garden’
 - Ic ran in tham gearde (dative)
‘I ran within the garden’
- English does not distinguish between the accusative and dative cases anymore
- One way to make the same distinctions is to use specialised prepositions (e.g. into)
- However, you can also use a single preposition with both meanings, and people will use other evidence to guess which is right
 - I ran in the garden
‘I ran into/within the garden’
- Another possibility can be seen in the Romance languages (e.g. French, Spanish, Portuguese)
- As you may remember, all these languages descend from Latin
- However, as in English, nouns in these languages no longer have separate forms for different cases such as accusative, dative, and ablative
- In Romance languages such as French, most prepositions can only express location, and not direction
 - Je cours dans le jardin
‘I run within the garden’
- To express direction, you need to change the verb
 - J’entre dans le jardin (en courant)
‘I enter the garden (running)’
- Different directions need different verbs
 - Je sors du jardin (en courant)
‘I exit the garden (running)’
- Prepositions and Word Order
 - The languages that we have seen so far all have prepositions, which come before the noun
 - As you may remember, some languages have postpositions, which come after the noun
 - Nihon ni (Japanese)
‘in Japan’
 - Türkiye’ye doğru (Turkish)
‘towards Turkey’
 - If you want to refer to prepositions and postpositions together, you can call them adpositions
 - Some languages are flexible enough that they can place prepositions either before or after the noun

- This was the case in Ancient Greek
 - perì tèn gèn
‘around the world’
 - tèn gèn péri
‘the world around’
- The first order was the normal one, but the second could be used for special emphasis
- This sort of variation is called anastrophe
- In English it is possible to put prepositions after a pronoun in questions and relative clauses
 - What was John looking for?
 - Mary found John’s dog, which he was looking for
- This preposition stranding is not possible in most other languages
- As you may know, it is not normally done in more formal English
 - For what was John looking?
 - Mary found John’s dog, for which he was looking
- Anastrophe and preposition stranding have the same origin
- Remember that English and Greek are both Indo-European languages, and go back to what was once a single language
- There was once a time when the line between prepositions and adverbs was less distinct
- These words could be placed freely, like adverbs, but relate to a noun, like prepositions
- Different languages have reduced this flexibility in different ways (e.g. preposition stranding = English, anastrophe = Greek)
- Prepositions and Articles
 - In some languages, there are prepositions that contract with articles to form a single word
 - He spoke of the weather
 - Il parlait du temps (French: du = de + le)
 - Er sprach vom Wetter (German: vom = von + dem)
 - Labhair sé faoin aimsir (Irish: faoin = faoi + an)
- Prepositions and Pronouns
 - Some languages even combine prepositions with pronouns
 - This is a common feature of Celtic languages such as Irish and Welsh
 - Labhair sé fúithi (Irish: fúithi = faoi + í)
‘He spoke about it’
 - Soniodd amdani (Welsh: amdani = amdan + hi)
 - If the noun is plural (*cats, dogs*), then the determiner will be plural
 - Other languages, such as French and German, do something that may seem similar
 - Cette jaquette appartient à ce livre
‘This jacket belongs to this book’
 - Dieser Umschlag gehört zu diesem Buch
 - Elle y appartient
‘It belongs to it’
 - Er gehört dazu
 - However, these special words (*y, dazu, etc*) are actually adverbs
 - In French, *y* means ‘there’
 - In German, *dazu* is formed from *da* ‘there’ and *zu* ‘to’
(like *thereto* in English)
 - Why do these languages use adverbs instead of a preposition + pronoun?
 - To help clarify gender
 - In French, *lui* can mean either ‘him’ or ‘it’
 - The same is true for *ihm* in German

- To avoid confusion, speakers of these languages tend to use preposition + pronoun for people and adverbs for things
 - Er gehört zu ihm
'It belongs to him'
 - Er gehört dazu
'It belongs to it'
- Conclusion
 - We have talked about prepositions and their similarity to adverbs
 - We have seen that prepositions can assign one or more cases
 - We have also seen that prepositions (adpositions) can appear before or after nouns
 - In some languages prepositions can be put in more than one place
 - There are languages where prepositions fuse together with articles or even pronouns
 - Some languages substitute adverbs for preposition + pronoun combinations