

We use *at* for a specific location or event.

The annual meeting will be at the Queen Hotel.

We use *on* for a point on a surface or along a line.

The noise from the machinery on the basement doesn't reach up here.

The documents are on the desk.

Over, above

Over and *above* mean higher than something else.

I put some tape over the hole in the paper. (= directly on top of)

The light above my desk is broken. (= higher than, but not on top of)

In some cases *over* and *above* are the same.

Please hang the frame on the wall over/above the couch.

Under, below

Under and *below* mean lower than something else.

My office is one floor below the CEO's office. (= in a lower position)

The document is under all those files. (= covered or concealed)

Beside / by, between, among

Beside / by, between and *among* all indicate a position of one or more people or things in relation to other people or things.

The guest was standing by/beside the president of the company. (= next to)

What will you do if there is a fire between you and the fire escape? (= two things)

My office is among the ones on the south side of the building, near the fire escape. (= more than two)

Behind, in front of, opposite

Behind, in front of, and *opposite* indicate a position of facing or not facing a person, place, or thing.

The outlet is on the wall behind the cabinet. (= in the back of)

I parked in front of the house.

I parked on the opposite side of the road. (= on the other side of the road)

Prepositions of movement or direction

Some prepositions show movement from one location to another.

From, to

From and *to* indicate movement in leaving and arriving at a place.

We walked from the house to the stadium.

Into, out of

Into and *out of* indicate movement to or from an enclosed area. *We*

went into the showroom. (= move to the inside of an area) *I took the*

files out of the archive. (= move to the outside of an area)

Onto, off

Onto and *off* indicate movement to or from the outside or surface of an area.

The president stepped onto the stage to make his speech. (= move to the top of)

Jason fell off the ladder while he was trying to install a light fixture. (= move from a place)

Across, over

Across and *over* indicate movement from one side of an area to another side.

We went across the street to a pancake house. (= movement from one side to another)

We saw the thief jump over the fence. (= movement from one side to another by going above something)

Along, through

Along and *through* indicate movement following one point in a line to another point.

We walked along the path. (= movement following a line)

We walked through the forest. (= movement from one end to the other inside something)

Some of the words that are common prepositions can be used in other ways.

We climbed up the stairs. (preposition)

We got up early yesterday. (phrasal verb, see Unit 25)

Both parties signed the contract above the dotted line. (preposition)

Examine at the phrase above. (adverb, - see Unit 9)