

Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase shows how a noun or pronoun relates to another word in a sentence.

- The lamp is (*on the table*).
- The lamp is (*under the table*).
- The lamp fell (*off the table*).

A prepositional phrase (PP) has three parts:

- **Preposition** - a prep. phrase **MUST have this**. It's always FIRST in the phrase.
- **Modifiers** (adjectives) - a PP does NOT have to have modifiers. Mods come between the prep and object.
- **Object of the Preposition** - a prep. phrase **MUST have this**. It's a noun or pronoun and it's always LAST in the prep. phrase.

- The table is (^P ^M ^O *on the lamps*).

- The lamp is (^P ^M ^O *behind the table*).

A prep. phrase can have several modifiers:

- The lamp is (^P ^M ^M ^O *in the lion's mouth*).

- The lamp is (^P ^M ^M ^M ^M ^O *in the lion's hot, drooly mouth*).

A prep. phrase can have no modifiers:

- The lamp is (^P ^O *in Hudson*).

- The lamp is (^P ^O *in 1902*).

Important tip! A prepositional phrase *always* starts with a preposition and **ends at the next noun**.

- The lamp is (^P ^M ^M ^O *under the massive truck*).

Another important tip! Simple subjects and simple predicates (verbs) will *never, ever be found in a prep. phrase*. Identifying prep. phrases helps you find the SS and SP!

- The lamp (^P ^M ^M ^O *in the trash can*) (^P ^M ^O *on the beach*) was lovely.

Still *another* important tip! Beware of adverbs! They can be prepositions depending on their placement.

From *The Bourne Supremacy* by Robert Ludlum.

- Nelson hung **up the phone**. (“up the phone” LOOKS like a PP, but it’s an adverb for “hung.”)
- The distraught woman swept **by on her way** to the staircase exit. (“by on her way” LOOKS like a PP, but “by” is an adverb for “swept.” “**on her way**” IS a PP.)
- Marie lay on the narrow bed staring **up at the ceiling**. (“up at the ceiling” LOOKS like a PP, but “up” is an adverb for “staring.” “**at the ceiling**” IS a PP.)

Also be aware that prep phrases will NEVER have verbs in them!

- **Without going back** to the sedan, the guard pressed a button and the orange bar was raised. (“Without going back” LOOKS like a PP, but PPs do NOT have verbs in them!)

One last important tip! Be careful of the *infinitive*. An infinitive looks like a preposition because it starts with the word *to*. **To is a preposition in a LOT of cases, but when you have “to + a verb”, you have an infinitive and it's NOT a prepositional phrase!**

- We have (**NO!** **P M O** **P O**) (**to go**) (**to the store**) (**after school**).
- The charity organization came (**NO!** **to collect**) a donation.
- The Patriots are going (**NO!** **to win**) the Super Bowl.
- Native Americans had (**NO!** **to fish**) (**NO!** **to collect**) food (**P M O** **for their people**).

