

Commonly Confused Prepositions

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While prepositions are limited in number, they are important because they act as vital markers to the structure of a sentence; they mark special relationships between persons, objects, and locations. Prepositions hold a privileged position as parts of speech as they are a “closed class.” In other words, they are a select group of words that don’t accept new members to their club. This is in contrast to nouns, adjectives and verbs, which welcome new additions to their respective groups all the time and are open to evolving with usage.



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Do not let the known, limited pool of prepositions fool you, though; for instance, the same preposition “to” in English can thus be used as a lexical spatial preposition: *I’m going to London*, or as a functional preposition assigning dative case: *Give the book to him!*

Today, we are going to look at the subtle, but relevant, difference between some prepositions whose usages are commonly confused:

In/into

'Into' and 'in' refer to three dimensional spaces. However, 'into' is used with movement from one place into another.

For example: I walked into the house.

'In' is used when a thing or person is stationary 'in' a place.

For example: I found the book in the drawer.

On/onto

'Onto' indicates that something is placed onto something else.

For example: I put the dishes onto the table when I set it.

'On' shows that something already rests on a surface.

For example, The picture is hanging on the wall.

Among/between

Between is used to show position between two or more well-defined objects.

For example: Sadness is but a wall between two gardens.

We use among to talk about things which are not clearly separated because they are part of a group or crowd or mass of objects.

For example: If you live among wolves you have to act like a wolf.

Prepositions are even harder to master for non-native speakers of English as the native, first-language nuances of non-native speakers hinder the logic of proper preposition usage. Each language has its own set of grammar rules, so there are points of conflict when someone wants to learn a second language. As observed, the most common

preposition misses are as follows.

- Transfer of a specific preposition from their native language into English (substitution);
- Usage of a preposition when it should not be used (addition);
- An obligatory preposition is omitted in some cases (omission).

Let's ensure accurate usage of prepositions not only through the general understanding of their specific usage but also understanding their usage in a given context.

Cite this article

Enago Academy, Commonly Confused Prepositions. Enago Academy. 2016/08/23. <https://www.enago.com/academy/commonly-confused-prepositions/>