49. Prepositions (general)

1 Definition

Prepositions have two basic functions. First (usually involving de or a) to provide a transparent link between two words, as in *réussir* a *faire* (to manage to do) or le taux de chômage (the rate of unemployment). And second to express a distinct relationship between a word and the rest of its sentence, as in Le livre est sur la table (The book is on the table).

Where a preposition applies to two or more nouns linked by *et* or *mais*, the preposition generally occurs before each noun:

J'ai besoin d'un ouvre-boîte et d'un tire-bouchon

I need a tin opener and a corkscrew

2 Linking two words / phrases

The prepositions de or a are often used to provide a link between a verb or adjective and an infinitive:

Je n'ai pas réussi à convaincre notre patron

I didn't succeed in convincing our boss

Il ne sera pas facile de convaincre notre patron

It won't be easy to convince our boss

There is no rule as to which type of expressions take de and which take a, so it's best to learn which preposition an expression takes as you would the gender of nouns. A detailed listing can be found at the end of the realfrench.net advanced grammar.

3 Expressing relationships between words

3.1 General simple prepositions

Preposition	Meaning	Preposition	Meaning
à	to, from	envers	towards (attitude)
après	after	hors, excepté	except
avant	before	malgré	despite
avec	with	outre	other than, beside
chez	at the house of, with	par	by, through
contre	against	parmi	among
dans	in, into	pendant	during
de	of, from	pour	for
depuis	since	sans	without
derrière	behind	sauf	except
dès	from (time, place)	selon	according
devant	in front of	sous	under
en	in, into	sur	on, onto
entre	between	vers	towards

3.2 General compound prepositions

Preposition	Meaning	Preposition	Meaning
à cause de	because of	au sujet de	about
à côté de	next to	autour de	around
à l'aide de	with (the help of)	d'après	according to
à l'égard de	regarding	de la part de	on behalf of
à l'exception de	except for	en dépit de	despite
à moins de	unless	en-dessous de	under, below
à propos de	about	faute de	for lack of
à travers	through	grâce à	thanks to
au-dehors de	outside	le long de	along
au-delà de	beyond	lors de	at the time of
au-dessous de	under, below	près de	near
au-dessus de	above	quant à	as for
au lieu de	instead of	viv-à-vis de	opposite