

Prepositions Used for Time and Place

The use of prepositions in English is often idiomatic—a word that means “peculiar to a certain language”—and there are many exceptions to general rules. Therefore, correct preposition use must be learned gradually through experience. Following is a chart showing how three of the most common prepositions are used in some customary references to time and place:

Use of *On*, *In*, and *At* to Refer to Time and Place

Time

On *a specific day*: on Monday, on January 1, on your anniversary

In *a part of a day*: in the morning, in the daytime (but at night)

In *a month or a year*: in December, in 1776

In a period of time: in an hour, in a few days, in a while

At a specific time: at 10:00 A.M., at midnight, at sunset, at dinnertime

Place

On a surface: on the desk, on the counter, on a ceiling

In a place that is enclosed: in my room, in the office, in the box

At a specific location: at the mall, at his house, at the ballpark

ACTIVITY 1

Underline the correct preposition in parentheses.

1. Can you baby-sit for my children (on, at) Thursday?
2. Please come to my office (on, at) 3:00.
3. You will find some computer disks (in, on) the desk drawer.
4. Miguel will begin his new job (in, at) two weeks.
5. A fight broke out between two groups of friends (on, at) the park.



ACTIVITY 2

Underline the correct preposition in parentheses.

1. Tina's husband always sends her flowers (on, at) her birthday.
2. The patients (at, in) the waiting room at the dentist's office all looked uneasy.
3. Let's meet (on, at) the coffee shop after work.
4. The bank is open (in, on) Thursday evenings, but only until six.
5. The Great Depression began when the stock market crashed (in, at) 1929.