Academic Success Centre

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Prepositions of Place

At, On, In

These prepositions show the position of people, places, and things. E.g. **At** a restaurant **in** southern Spain, I noticed many beautiful paintings **on** the walls.

Preposition Exceptions

In English, certain expressions are idiomatic (culturally engrained). Below are a few examples:

At this/that moment	At the end/beginning
On holiday	On the radio
In a loud/angry/quiet voice	In a good/bad mood

Both **at** and **to** can follow certain verbs; the meaning of the verb is different in each case: to throw, run, or shout.

E.g. Bill threw a stone to me/ran to me/shouted to me. (a friendly action)

Compare the above with the following: E.g. Bill threw a stone **at** me/ran **at** me/shouted **at** me. (a hostile action)

Use of Prepositions

There are no rules that govern how much nouns and verbs can be modified. However, when used excessively, they can sound somewhat comical in an attempt at over clarification. Compare, for example, the following sentences:

1. Here **is** an example **of** the use **of** the rule **of** justice **in** argumentation. (many prepositional phrases)

This passage exemplifies argumentation using the rule **of** justice. (a single prepositional phrase)

2. Grassroots peace movements **are** vital **in** ensuring the future well-being **of** the international community.

Grassroots peace movements help maintain international security.

References

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