

## Phrasal Verbs and Prepositions

“The Patriarch Joseph, after agreeing with the Latins that their formula of the Holy Ghost proceeding *from* the Son meant the same as the Greek formula of the Holy Ghost proceeding *through* the Son, fell ill and died. An unkind scholar remarked that after muddling his prepositions what else could he decently do?”

-Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople 1453*

Some verbs in English must be followed by a specific preposition. Others change meaning when combined with different prepositions. Because these verbs rely on prepositions for their meaning, writers need to use a proper verb-preposition combination to communicate clearly. “I brought cake *from* the party” means the opposite of “I brought cake *to* the party,” and “I brought cake the party” is nonsensical. Below are some of the most common verb-preposition combinations.

**account for**

I can't *account for* Sarah's actions.

**accuse [someone] of**

James *accused* her *of* stealing.

**(dis)agree on**

They *disagree on* the definition of theft.

**(dis)agree with**

Honestly? I *agree with* him.

**allude to**

He *alluded to* her shady past.

**apologize for**

He *apologized for* involving me in the dispute.

**apologize to**

Sarah did not *apologize to* me.

**apply for**

She had *applied for* a passport two months ago.

**argue with**

They *argued with* each other constantly.

**argue about**

They *argued about* lots of things.

**argue that**

Sarah *argued that* James did not love her.

**arrive at**

She explained how she *arrived at* that conclusion.

**ask [someone] for**

I *asked* James *for* his honest opinion.

**become of**

Who knows what will *become of* their marriage.

**believe in**

I don't *believe in* happy endings anymore.

**belong to**

Sarah said the jewels rightfully *belonged to* her.

**blame [someone] for**

Sarah *blames* James *for* the broken window.

**blame [something] on**

He *blames* the damage *on* her.

**borrow from**

James had *borrowed from* her in the past.

**care for**

Sarah says he never *cared for* her.

**come from**

She *comes from* a broken home.

**compare to**

This situation can't be *compared to* past disputes.

**complain about**

James *complains about* it constantly.

**compliment [someone] on**

I *complimented* Sarah *on* her grace under pressure.

**congratulate [someone] on**

Her lawyer *congratulated* her *on* not giving in.

**consent to**

She did not *consent to* a police search.

**consist of**

The physical evidence *consists of* broken glass.

**convince [someone] of**

It will be hard to *convince* the jurors *of* her guilt.

**decide between**

They will have to *decide between* the two stories.

**delight in**

James seems to *delight in* her anxiety.

**depend on/upon**

Everything *depends on* the jury's decision.

**detract from**

James's arrogance *detracts from* his appeal.

**dream of/about**

Last night, I *dreamt about* Sarah.

**explain [something] to**

I didn't *explain* my premonition *to* anyone.

**happen to**

I don't want anything bad to *happen to* her.

**hear of**

I've never *heard of* a case like this.

**hear about**

Yesterday, the jury *heard about* it from James.

**hear from**

Today, we will *hear from* Sarah.

**insist on**

She still *insists on* her innocence.

**invite [someone] to**

The judge *invited* Sarah *to* tell her side of the story.

**laugh about**

It's hard to *laugh about* the situation now.

**laugh at**

James *laughed at* Sarah's defense.

**laugh with**

We did not *laugh with* him.

**listen for**

Breathlessly, we *listened for* the verdict.

**look at**

The judge *looked at* them.

**look for**

I *looked for* Sarah in the hallway afterwards.

**object to**

James, obviously, *objected to* the verdict.

**prefer [something] to**

The jury *preferred* Sarah's version of events *to* his.

**plan on**

Sarah *plans on* leaving him.

Some prepositions also take the form of two or three word phrases that don't include a verb. These are known as "phrasal" prepositions. The most common are:

**according to**

*According to* the doctor, my condition is very rare.

**across from**

Would you prefer to sit *across from* me?

**apart/aside from**

*Aside from* some minor symptoms, I feel fine.

**because of**

People judge me *because of* media stereotypes.

**by virtue of**

But I am harmless *by virtue of* my upbringing.

**due to**

Those one or two accidents were *due to* negligence.

**except for**

*Except for* those incidents, I've never hurt anyone.

**for the sake of**

I tell you this *for the sake of* honesty.

**in back/front of**

Whoops, I didn't mean to do that *in front of* you.

**in addition to**

I do crave other things *in addition to* red meat.

**in spite of**

I have an active dating life *in spite of* my condition.

**instead of**

*Instead of* the movie, let's go for a walk in the park.

**on account of**

It will be romantic *on account of* the full moon.

**on top of**

It looks nice and private *on top of* that lonely hill.

**out of**

What do you mean we're *out of* time?

**regardless of**

I would stay *regardless of* my work schedule.

**short of**

You're *short of* sleep; I get it.

**up to**

Shall we meet again? It's *up to* you.