

Prepositions

English Grammar · A2

(at / in / on)

Prepositions of time

at	on	in
a clock time	a day / date	month / year
<i>at 7 o'clock</i>	<i>on Monday</i>	<i>in July</i>

Prepositions of time: reference card grid

When indicating time, **at** / **in** / **on** each have specific uses:

- **at** + **specific time** / **point**: at 7 o'clock, at night, at the weekend.
- **on** + **specific day** / **date**: on Monday, on May 1st, on my birthday.
- **in** + **longer period**: in the morning, in July, in 2020, in winter.

The class starts at nine.

This class starts at nine o'clock.

We met on Friday.

We met on Friday.

My birthday is in May.

My birthday is in May.

Note: The scope increases from small to large: at (point) → on (day) → in (month / year / period).

(at / in / on)

When indicating location:

- **at** + **a specific point** / **place**: at the bus stop, at home, at school.
- **in** + **interior space**: in the room, in China, in a box.
- **on** + **surface** / **line**: on the table, on the wall, on the second floor.

She is at home.

She is at home.

The book is on the table.

The book is on the table.

There are fish in the river.

There are fish in the river.

(Prepositions of movement)

Indicating **direction** / **movement**:

- **to**: Towards a place. **into**: Entering inside. **out of**: Coming out from inside.
- **up** (upward) / **down** (downward) / **across** (cross over) / **through** (pass through the interior).

I go to work by bus.

I go to work by bus.

The cat jumped into the box.

The cat jumped into the box.

Note: *to* indicates “going somewhere,” so do not confuse it with *at* (being somewhere): go **to** school (go to school) vs be **at** school (be at school).

Common Errors

- × *in Monday* → ✓ **on Monday**; × *at July* → ✓ **in July** — Use *on* for specific days and *in* for months / years.
- × *in the morning of Monday* → ✓ **on Monday morning** — When referring to the morning / evening of a specific day, the preposition upgrades to *on*.
- × *I arrived to Beijing.* → ✓ I arrived **in** Beijing. / I arrived **at** the station — *arrive* does not take *to*; use *in* for large places and *at* for small locations.

- × ~~listen music / look the picture / wait him~~ → ✓ listen **to** music / look **at** the picture / wait **for** him — Although these verbs may not take prepositions in Chinese, the corresponding prepositions in English cannot be omitted.