

ENGLISH WITH SHARON

PREPOSITIONS OF TIME

Prepositions of time are used a lot in everyday English and also in more formal situations. If you want to meet your friends for dinner or your boss wants you to organise a business meeting, you need to understand how to use them. But prepositions of time are often confusing for English learners. This is your chance to understand them better!

AT, IN, ON

The main prepositions of time we use in English are at, in and on. The following table explains where they are used, with simple examples. This is followed by some exercises where YOU decide which preposition to use. Then you can look at the answers!



AT



Use AT for ...

Clock time	<p>I'm meeting John at 4.30.</p> <p>The train departs at 7'oclock.</p> <p>The train departs at approximately 7 o'clock.</p> <p>I go to bed at midnight.</p>
Specific times of day	<p>He usually wakes up at dawn.</p>
Other general points of time	<p>We will go for a long walk at the weekend.</p> <p>I'm not working at the moment.</p> <p>Sorry, he isn't in the office at present.</p> <p>She will leave her job at the end of the year.</p>
Mealtimes	<p>I like the children to eat with the adults at dinner.</p>
Festivals / general religious holiday periods	<p>We'll see our grandparents at Christmas.</p> <p>We'll have fireworks at New Year.</p>

IN

Use IN for ...



Parts of the day	I always have a coffee and toast in the morning.
Months	Our wedding anniversary is in June.
Years	We moved to Milan in 2012.
Centuries	Shakespeare died in the seventeenth century.
Seasons	It often snows in winter.
Periods of historical time	The Beatles were very popular in the 1960's. My grandparents say life was hard in the past.
Duration: how much time it takes to do something	You can get to Paris in one hour from here. Mr Jones will be back in a few moments. Mr Jones will be back in two days.

ON

Use ON for ...



Days of the week	<p>I play football on Saturdays</p> <p>He takes the train to work on week days.</p>
Dates	<p>Our wedding anniversary is on 7th June.</p>
Specific festival days or feast days or dates	<p>We will see our grandparents on Christmas Day.</p> <p>We will have fireworks on New Year's Eve.</p> <p>We will have a romantic dinner on Valentine's Day.</p>
Particular unspecified occasions	<p>The police wanted to find out what the suspect was doing on that morning</p> <p>She was very anxious on the day of her job interview.</p> <p>He always gives her roses on their wedding anniversary.</p> <p>I hope I receive lots of presents on my birthday.</p>
Anniversaries and birthdays	<p>He always gives her roses on their wedding anniversary.</p> <p>I hope I receive lots of presents on my birthday.</p>

EXERCISES

Now try these exercises. You can look at the explanations above to help you. The answers are on the last page, but don't look at these until you have finished the exercises!

1. She flew to New York _____ Tuesday.
2. _____ September, my son begins university law studies.
3. If John is free, we'll drive to the lake _____ the beginning of the week.
4. The leaves in the park turn brown _____ the autumn.
5. They visited their mother _____ Easter Sunday.
6. Why do we give presents _____ Christmas?
7. I have my piano lesson _____ Thursdays.
8. The train network system developed _____ the nineteenth century.
9. We will organise a surprise for my dad _____ Father's Day.
10. The boat arrives _____ 4.30pm.
11. The football match is _____ the afternoon.
12. I rarely eat a hot meal _____ lunchtime, because I have no time.

ANSWERS

1. She flew to New York **ON** Tuesday.
2. **IN** September, my son begins university law studies.
3. If John is free, we'll drive to the lake **AT** the beginning of the week.
4. The leaves in the park turn brown **IN** the autumn.
5. They visited their mother **ON** Easter Sunday.
6. Why do we give presents **AT** Christmas?
7. I have my piano lesson **ON** Thursdays.
8. The train network system developed **IN** the nineteenth century.
9. We will organise a surprise for my dad **ON** Father's Day.
10. The boat arrives **AT** 4.30pm.
11. The football match is **IN** the afternoon.
12. I rarely eat a hot meal **AT** lunchtime, because I have no time.

WHAT NEXT?

Have you completed the exercises and checked the answers?

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