

24 Common phrases with prepositions

1 Phrases of place

	PHRASE	EXAMPLE
at	at home	<i>I'm usually at home in the evenings.</i>
	at school	<i>The children are at school next week so we can't come.</i>
	at work	<i>Robert's at work now – why don't you call him there?</i>
in	in bed	<i>Teenagers often stay in bed till late.</i>
on	on holiday	<i>Where are you going on holiday this year?</i>
	on business	<i>Melissa's in Rome on business this week. (working there)</i>



We don't use *to* with *home*, *here* or *there*:

X I'm tired. I want to go to home now. ✓ I'm tired. I want to go home now.

2 Phrases of time

	PHRASE	MEANING	EXAMPLE
at	at first	in the beginning	<i>At first I was unhappy at college but now I really like it.</i>
	at last	after a long time	<i>At last it stopped raining so we went outside.</i>
	at once	immediately	<i>The ambulance arrived almost at once.</i>
	at the same time	together	<i>You can't watch TV and study at the same time.</i>
in	in a hurry	have to do something quickly	<i>I can't talk now. I'm in a hurry.</i>
	in the end	finally	<i>We solved the problem in the end, after a lot of work.</i>
	in time	early enough for something	<i>Make sure you get home in time for dinner.</i>
on	on time	at the right time	<i>The plane left on time.</i>

In time means 'early enough for something':

I didn't arrive at the station in time for the six o'clock train, so I had to wait for the next one.

On time means 'at the correct time':

Last year 92 percent of South-East trains left on time.

3 Other common phrases

	PHRASE	MEANING	EXAMPLE
by	by chance	you did not plan or expect it	<i>We found this wonderful restaurant by chance.</i>
	by mistake	you did not intend to do it	<i>I sent that email by mistake – I didn't want you to read it.</i>
in	in love	loving someone in a romantic way	<i>My father says that he's still in love with my mother after twenty-five years!</i>
	in public	where everyone can see/hear	<i>I was very nervous the first time I spoke in public.</i>
	in private	where other people can't see/hear	<i>Can we discuss your work in private?</i>
on	on fire	burning	<i>The motorway was closed because a car was on fire.</i>
	on purpose	deliberately	<i>I didn't get wet on purpose – I fell in the water.</i>
for	for sale	you can buy it	<i>The house at the end of the road is for sale.</i>
out of	out of order	not working	<i>The lift is out of order. We'll have to use the stairs.</i>