Prepositions

Prepositions indicate time, place, or context, letting the reader know when and where things are happening in a sentence. Learning to use them properly will help you to be specific in your writing.

In the examples below, prepositions are italicized.

1. The box below demonstrates some basic prepositions related to place:

   I am above the box.
   I am on the box.
   I am next to the box.
   I am in front of the box.
   I am behind the box.
   I am under the box.

2. Prepositions that indicate time include words like:

   After
   Before
   During
   Often
   Since
   When
   While

Examples:

After the performance, we went to get ice cream.
We were in our seats before the start of the show.
Often during summer, we throw parties on the back porch.
Since you’ve been gone, I can breathe for the first time.

3. Other prepositions are used as transitions, introducing new ideas and counterpoints. These include, but are not limited to,

   According to
   Although
   Because of
   Despite
   Due to
   However
   In addition to
   In

Examples:

According to de Gaulle, “the graveyards are filled with indispensable men.”
Although the team performed valiantly, they lost the contest.
The team did well in some areas; however, there was much for them to improve on.
The game was postponed due to the thunderstorm.
He took a second brownie in addition to the one he’d taken earlier.

4. In addition, countless adverbs, as well as verbs ending in -ing, can also serve as prepositions.

Examples:
Admittedly, I don’t understand what’s going on here.
Sprinting home, she knew she had little time to waste.

TIP
When placed at the beginnings of sentences, prepositional words and phrases are usually followed by a comma; typically, the comma comes right before the subject of the sentence.