St. Louis Community College

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

A **prepositional phrase** begins with a preposition and ends with a noun—a person, place or thing. Prepositional phrases add description or answer questions like where or when.

Although prepositional phrases add valuable information to sentences, they may keep you from seeing the basic parts of a sentence, like the subject and verb. Learning to spot prepositional phrases will help you see the structure of a sentence more clearly.

What are the subject and verb in the following sentence?

> Under these circumstances one of the fellows drove to the North Woods during the first week of his vacation.

To find the subject and verb, cross out all the prepositional phrases:

> ~~Under these circumstances~~ one ~~of the fellows~~ drove ~~to the North Woods during the first week of his vacation~~.

When you do this, only two words are left—the subject and the verb.

Even in short sentences, you may identify the wrong word as the subject. To identify the subject, cross out the prepositional phrases, as in the following examples:

One of my friends lives in Chicago.	One ~~of my friends~~ lives ~~in Chicago~~.
Most of the team went on the trip.	Most ~~of the team~~ went ~~on the trip~~.

Remember this rule: The subject and verb are **never** in a prepositional phrase.

Some of the more common 50 English prepositions are used in phrases below:

on our own	**from** the president	**below** ground
upon the table	**to** the moon	**of** them
above the mantel	**into** the dark	**among** the crowd
over the river	**toward** the mountain	**without** promise
against the wall	**like** the sky	**except** them
at home	**around** the bend	**during** vacation
past the corner	**across** the country	**before** morning
in time	**within** the district	**until** dusk
beside the road	**under** water	**behind** the bushes
beneath the surface	**with** me	**by** the sea
through the woods	**inside** the school	**near** the house

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