

Patterns of meaning with prepositions in English

Adjectives and nouns are often formed from verbs and there are similarities concerning which preposition will be used as a complement.

Preposition	Verb	Adjective	Noun	Preposition	Verb	Adjective	Noun
about	<i>argue ask care complain enquire hang quarrel row talk</i>	<i>argumentative curious careful quarrelsome</i>	<i>argument enquiry quarrel row talk</i>	of	<i>approve conceive consist suspect talk</i>	<i>approving suspicious</i>	<i>approval concept suspicion</i>
at	<i>connive laugh</i>	Participles in <i>-ing</i> only	<i>laughter connivance</i>	on	<i>bear comment concentrate count decide depend insist plan rely</i>	<i>dependent insistent reliant</i>	<i>commentary concentration decision dependency insistence reliance</i>
for	<i>account ask long vouch vote wish</i>	<i>accountable asked longed wished</i>	<i>accountability request longing vote wish</i>	to	<i>admit amount conform object stick react</i>	<i>admissible conformable objectionable adherent reactive</i>	<i>admission conformity objection reaction</i>
from	<i>abstain suffer refrain</i>	Participles in <i>-ing</i> only	<i>abstention pain</i>	with	<i>acquaint agree coincide collide comply conform confuse deal</i>	<i>agreeable coincidental compliant conformable confusable</i>	<i>acquaintance agreement coincidence collision compliance conformity confusion</i>
in	<i>participate succeed</i>	<i>participatory successful unsuccessful</i>	<i>participation success</i>				

Nine prepositions are commonly used in the complementation of adjectives.

Preposition	Adjective	Noun	Preposition	Adjective	Noun
about	<i>glad, knowledgeable, mad, annoyed, pleased, angry, happy etc., e.g.: I was happy about the news</i>	<i>happiness, knowledge, annoyance etc., e.g.: His knowledge about the subject is immense</i>	of	<i>accused, afraid, certain, conscious, aware, glad, scared, terrified, fond, tired etc., e.g.: I am afraid of snakes</i>	<i>fear, accusation, certainty, awareness, terror etc., e.g.: The accusation of fraud was proven</i>
at	<i>alarmed, amused, terrible, awful, hopeless, surprised, dreadful, clever, good etc., e.g.: He's clever at twisting the argument</i>	<i>alarm, amusement, terror, surprise etc., e.g.: His amusement at my embarrassment was obvious</i>	on	<i>intent, severe, based, set, dependent, reliant, keen etc., e.g.: We are reliant on the money</i>	<i>dependency, reliance, keenness etc., e.g.: Her reliance on my help was mistaken</i>

The preposition *upon* is more formal in many circumstances and not possible for some adjectives (such as *keen*). Using *on* is always secure.

<p>for</p>	<p><i>embarrassed, bad, hopeful, optimistic, renowned, sorry, known, responsible</i> etc., e.g.: <i>The town is known for its crime</i></p> <p>These uses include the notion of something being unusual as in, e.g.: <i>It's small for an estate car</i> <i>That's not bad for a man</i></p>	<p><i>embarrassment, hope, optimism, sorrow, responsibility</i> etc., e.g.: <i>Your responsibility is for the whole project</i></p>	<p>to</p>	<p><i>opposed, averse, subject, liable, answerable, inclined</i> etc., e.g.: <i>He is liable to a fine</i></p>	<p><i>opposition, aversion, liability, inclination</i> etc., e.g.: <i>My aversion to flying means I can't go</i></p>
<p>from</p>	<p>These are often participle adjectives and include: <i>secured, defended, kept, exhausted, sheltered, protected, different, (in)distinguishable, tired</i> etc., e.g.: <i>She is indistinguishable from her sister</i></p>	<p><i>security, defence, shelter, protection</i> etc., e.g.: <i>The plants need protection from the wind</i></p>	<p>with</p>	<p><i>angry, busy, comfortable, compatible, impatient, familiar, content, furious, identical, sick, uneasy, unhappy, annoyed, bored, delighted, obsessed, pleased, satisfied</i> etc., e.g.: <i>This is not compatible with the policy</i></p>	<p><i>anger, compatibility, impatience, uneasiness, annoyance, delight</i> etc., e.g.: <i>Her impatience with delay was legendary</i></p>
<p>in</p>	<p><i>experienced, justified, persistent, (un)successful, interested, mistaken</i> etc., e.g.: <i>They were successful in their examinations</i></p>	<p><i>experience, justification, persistence, success, interest</i> etc., e.g.: <i>Your interest in grammar is obvious</i></p>			

Rules of thumb:

1. *about* and *on* frequently refer to subject matter (so one can have *a talk about* and *a talk on* a subject).
2. *of / out of, from* and *with* frequently refer to ingredients or materials (*cooked with, made out / out of, made from, constructed from, manufactured with* etc.).
3. *at* is frequently found in connection with ability (*good at, bad at* etc.)
4. *from* often implies protection (*secure from, sheltered from, shield from, screen from* etc.)
5. *with* frequently collocates with emotions (*angry with, unhappy with, delighted with, impatient with* etc.) and can often be replaced with *by* referring to the agent in passive constructions (*angered by, delighted by, annoyed by* etc.)