Identifying Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

(They’re everywhere…in your words and on your homework!)

DEFINITION: A preposition is a word that logically connects a noun or pronoun to another word in a sentence. Together, the preposition and the noun (called the object of the preposition) form a prepositional phrase that modifies another word in the sentence. Other words may come between the preposition and the noun that follows it. Adverb prepositional phrases answer such questions as When? Where? How? and Why? Adjective prepositional phrases answer such questions as Which one? What kind of? and How many? Here is a list of some common prepositions:

- around
- against
- between
- with
- onto
- about
- among
- into
- without
- at
- under
- behind
- through
- within
- to
- over
- beneath
- upon
- below
- before
- near
- in
- across
- toward
- until
- beside
- on
- above
- off
- from
- after
- for
- across
- next
- through

(See a writing handbook for a more complete list of prepositions, including prepositions of more than one word.

EXAMPLES (Prepositions are in bold italics and prepositional phrases are enclosed in parentheses):

- I like catsup and mustard (with my hotdogs).
- There is a lady bug sitting (under the window).
- After it stopped raining, the girl went (to her friend’s house) to play.
- (Notice that after and the second to do not introduce prepositional phrases.)
- We walked (to the store) and then rode the bus (over the bridge).
- The head (of the committee) will begin the meeting.

PRACTICE:

A. Directions: Underline any words used as prepositions in the sentences below.

1. Would you like to walk with me?
2. The dandelion is a common weed in most gardens.
3. At the moment, I need to take a nap.
4. Our corporation is proud of its friendly employees.
5. His father told him about the new job listing.
6. Who is the person to ask about the reference books on space exploration?
7. I want a double mocha latte with my breakfast.
8. To whom are you speaking?
Understanding and Identifying Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases, continued:

9. Has anyone in your family ever taken a vacation on a houseboat?

10. He returned to Mexico at the end of the quarter.

11. There are twenty-five fruit trees in her front yard.

11. Some first-year students have difficulty finding their classes at the beginning of the quarter.

12. Those pants of mine are too tight around the waist.

13. She ate dinner with her best friend last night.

14. While watching TV, my sisters fought over who would control the remote.

B. Underline the prepositions and put parentheses around the prepositional phrases. The first one is done for you.

1. He jogged (down the street) (with his energetic dog).

2. Tamera was the last one to give her paper to the teacher after class.

3. A flock of mallard ducks landed on the lake.

4. We needed to see the rules of the game before we played.

5. Alice turned left at the stop sign and then pulled into the parking lot.

6. There was a rare antique car parked beside mine at the mall.

7. The soccer ball flew over the net and landed in a puddle beside the field.

8. I wiped smudges of crayon from the table after the children left the room.

9. In the jungle, a person can see insects of amazing size, shape, and color.

10. The boat moved noisily toward the dock.

11. Many of my cousins live in Indiana.

12. Please put your bags under your seats, so that no one will trip.

13. Remember to give this message to your roommate after school.