Notes on prepositions

There are only about 100 prepositions in English so if you really want, you can learn them by heart. You might still find it difficult to use them correctly. Prepositions are very small words, but they can be quite confusing. In fact, for most ESL students prepositions are the biggest problem they face while learning English.

Here is an overview of prepositions.

**Prepositions** are words that show the relationship between a noun and another word or words in a sentence. Study the sentence given below.

*There is some water in the bottle.*

Here the preposition *in* shows the relationship between the phrases *some water* and *the bottle*. If you remove the preposition, the sentence wouldn’t make any sense at all.

The most common relations shown by prepositions are: time, place and direction.

While most prepositions are single words, there are also a few word groups that perform the same grammatical function. These word groups are often called **complex prepositions**. Examples are: *in addition to, in front of* and *such as.*

A prepositional phrase is a group of words introduced by a preposition. Prepositional phrases usually go at the beginning or at the end of a sentence.

Examples are: *at the most, at least* and *with respect to.*

A prepositional phrase can be used to modify a noun just like an adjective. Some prepositional phrases, merely give additional information. Even if you remove them from the sentence, there will be no ungrammaticality.