

These words, of course, are **not** always prepositions; they may not be serving that purpose in the sentence. Some of them may be **adverbs** at times instead of prepositions. We can decide which the word is by determining whether there is an **object**. Look carefully at these sentences:

The cat sprang *up* as if it intended to climb *up the tree*.

John brought *in* the apples he had gathered *in the orchard*.

Could a preposition have more than one object? This sentence answers the question:

I sent invitations *to Mary, Helen, and Jane*.

A very common preposition is *to*.

I came *to school* early this morning.

Were you invited *to the party*?

We must be careful not to confuse these phrases with the *infinitive*, which is *to* followed by a form of a verb, as *to walk, to understand, to prepare, to see*. What are the italicized expressions in the following?

I went *to the grocery* to buy some bread

I have a lesson *to prepare* before I can go *to the movie*.

The following are the prepositional phrases: *to the grocery, to the movie*.

The following are the infinitives: *to buy, to prepare*.

PRACTICE:

In the following sentences enclose each prepositional phrase in parentheses and place an *o* above each object of a preposition. There are 22 phrases in the first 4 sentences.

SUGGESTIONS: In preparing any drills, always read the entire sentence carefully first, as if you were reading it aloud, watching the pauses and grouping of words. The punctuation marks help you to do this.

You will not find a subject or a verb in any of these phrases.¹ If you are already accurate in locating subjects and verbs this will be one way of checking your work.

From Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*:²

1. On stormy nights, when the wind shook the four corners of the house, and the surf roared along the cove and up the cliffs, I would see him in a thousand forms, and with a thousand diabolical expressions.
2. Often I have heard the house shaking with "Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum"; all the neighbors joining in for dear life with the fear of death upon them, and each singing louder than the other sang, to avoid remark.
3. I remember the appearance of his coat, which he patched himself upstairs in his room, and which, before the end, was nothing but patches.
4. In the meantime, the captain gradually brightened up at his own music and at last flapped his hand upon the table before him in a way we all knew to mean—silence.

¹Certain more complicated prepositional phrases do contain subjects and verbs, as in this sentence:

"He asked me a question about how the machine is operated." This is equivalent to "He asked me a question about the operation of the machine," and the object of the preposition is the entire clause, "how the machine is operated." You need not watch for these yet, however.

²From *Treasure Island* by R. L. Stevenson. Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.