

Prepositions of time and place: at, on and in

CEFR A2-B1 · 20 questions · A4 / US Letter

At, on and in for clock times, days and periods, and for points, surfaces and spaces.

The rule

Time: at, on and in by size

- At plus a clock time, a mealtime or a point in the day: at seven o'clock, at noon, at lunchtime, at midnight, at night.
- On plus a day or a date: on Monday, on Friday morning, on 5 May, on my birthday, on New Year's Day.
- In plus a longer box: in October, in 2026, in summer, in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening.
- The pattern by size: at (a point), on (a day), in (a period).

Other time prepositions

- For plus a length of time: for three hours, for two weeks, for a long time.
- Since plus a starting point: since Monday, since 2020, since I was a child.
- During plus a noun that names a period: during the film, during the summer, during the meeting.
- By means not later than: "Finish the report by Friday." Until means up to that time: "I worked until midnight."
- In plus a future length of time means at the end of it: "The train leaves in ten minutes."

Place: at, on and in by shape

- At plus a point or a building you are visiting: at the door, at the bus stop, at the station, at home, at school, at work.
- On plus a surface or a line: on the table, on the wall, on the floor, on the bus, on the train, on the second floor.
- In plus an enclosed space or an area: in the room, in the car, in London, in Spain, in the sea, in the middle.
- At the corner (British) and on the corner (American) are both correct in their variety.

Fixed pairs worth memorising

- At home, at work, at school, at university, at the airport, at the party.
- In bed, in hospital, in prison, in the car, in the park, in town.
- On the bus, on the train, on the plane, on a bike, on the left, on the internet, on the phone.
- Arrive in a city or country, arrive at a building or event: arrive in Paris, arrive at the hotel.
- A few pairs change meaning: in the corner of a room, but on the corner of a street.

Questions

Write your answer on the line under each question. Check your work with the answer key on the last page.

1. The film starts ___ 8 o'clock.

2. My birthday is ___ 12 September.

3. We usually go skiing ___ January.

4. She has lived in Dublin ___ 2019.

5. I have known him ___ ten years.

6. Please finish the report ___ Friday.

7. He worked ___ midnight and then went home.

8. I will see you ___ Monday morning.

9. The keys are ___ the kitchen table.

10. The children are playing ___ the garden.

11. I will meet you ___ the bus stop.

12. We arrived ___ Paris early in the morning.

13. I fell asleep ___ the film.

14. My uncle is ___ hospital after his operation.

15. She goes to school ___ foot.

16. The shop closes ___ night.

17. He was born ___ 1998.

18. The train leaves ___ ten minutes.

19. I will wait for you ___ the station entrance.

20. We stayed at a hotel ___ the beach.

Answer key

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1. **at** — Clock times take at: at 8 o'clock.
2. **on** — Days and dates take on: on 12 September.
3. **in** — Months, seasons, years and longer periods take in: in January.
4. **since** — Since names the starting point of an open period.
5. **for** — For measures a length of time: for ten years.
6. **by** — By means not later than Friday.
7. **until** — Until means up to a point in time and describes continued activity. By would mean he finished at or before it.
8. **on** — A day plus a part of the day takes on: on Monday morning.
9. **on** — A table is a surface, so it takes on.
10. **in** — A garden is a defined space, so it takes in.
11. **at** — A bus stop is a point in space, so it takes at.
12. **in** — Arrive in for a city or country: arrive in Paris.
13. **during** — During comes before a noun that names a period: during the film.
14. **in** — In hospital is a fixed phrase for a patient. At the hospital means at the building.
15. **on** — On foot is a fixed phrase. By car, by bus and by train also take no article.
16. **at** — At night is the fixed phrase. Other parts of the day use in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening.
17. **in** — Years take in: in 1998. A date takes on: on 3 May 1998.
18. **in** — In plus a length of time means at the end of that period from now: in ten minutes.
19. **at** — The entrance is a meeting point, so it takes at.
20. **by** — By the beach means next to it. On the beach would mean standing on the sand, and at the beach is more American.