

Prepositions of time: at, on and in

CEFR A1-A2 · 20 questions · A4 / US Letter

At marks a point on the clock, on marks a day, in marks a bigger period. The size of the time decides the preposition.

The rule

At: the exact point

- Use at with clock times: at six o'clock, at 8.30, at noon, at midnight.
- Use at with night and weekend in British English: at night, at the weekend, at Christmas.
- At also marks an age or a stage: at sixteen, at the end of the film, at the moment.
- Think of a dot on a clock face: one point, one preposition. At six, at ten past two.

On: days and dates

- Use on with days of the week: on Monday, on Friday morning.
- Use on with dates: on 5 May, on my birthday, on New Year's Day.
- Use on with a day plus a part of the day: on Saturday evening.
- Days are single pages in a calendar, so they take on. At the weekend is the common exception in British English.

In: months, years and long periods

- Use in with months, seasons, years, decades and centuries: in June, in winter, in 2026, in the 1990s.
- Use in with parts of the day: in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening.
- Use in with a period before something finishes: in ten minutes, in three weeks, in the future.
- In also describes how long something takes: "I finished the book in two days."

By, until, during and for

- By means not later than: "Send it by Friday." It sets a deadline.
- Until means up to a point and then it stops: "The shop is open until nine."
- During means inside a period: "I slept during the film."
- For measures a length of time: "I lived there for six years."

Fixed phrases to memorise

- No preposition: last night, next week, this morning, every day, yesterday, tomorrow.
- Ago looks back from now: "She left two hours ago."
- From and to mark a range: "The office is open from nine to five."
- In time means early enough; on time means at the arranged moment.

Questions

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

1. The train leaves ___ seven o'clock.

2. We have a lesson ___ Wednesday.

3. My birthday is ___ 3 May.

4. It rains a lot ___ April.

5. She was born ___ 2005.

6. I usually read ___ the evening.

7. He never works ___ night.

8. Please send the form ___ Friday.

9. The museum is open ___ six o'clock every day.

10. She fell asleep ___ the film.

11. We stayed in Paris ___ five days.

12. I will be back ___ ten minutes.

13. They met ___ a cold winter morning.

14. I saw her ___ last Friday.

15. He arrived ___ time for the start.

16. The shop closes ___ midnight.

17. We will know the result ___ two days.

18. She has worked here ___ 2019.

19. The meeting is ___ Monday morning.

20. Finish the exercise ___ the lesson.

Answer key

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1. **at** — A clock time is a point, so the time preposition is at.
2. **on** — A day of the week takes on.
3. **on** — A date is a single day, so it takes on.
4. **in** — A month is a long period, so it takes in.
5. **in** — A year is a long period, so it takes in.
6. **in** — The evening is a part of the day, and that period takes in.
7. **at** — At night is the fixed phrase for this point in the daily cycle.
8. **by** — By sets a deadline, meaning any time up to Friday.
9. **until** — Until marks the end of a continuing period, here opening hours.
10. **during** — During means inside the period of the film.
11. **for** — For measures a length of time, here five days.
12. **in** — In marks a period of time measured from now, so in ten minutes.
13. **on** — A part of a named day takes on, so on a cold winter morning.
14. **no preposition** — Last drops the preposition, so the time phrase stands alone.
15. **in** — In time means early enough before the start; by would name a deadline.
16. **at** — Midnight is a point on the clock, so it takes at.
17. **in** — In marks how far ahead the result will arrive.
18. **since** — Since marks the starting point of a period that continues, so since 2019.
19. **on** — A day plus a part of the day keeps on: on Monday morning.
20. **during** — During means inside the period of the lesson.