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Prepositions

A preposition is a word which is used to describe the relationship between other words in a sentence. Prepositions are used before a noun or a pronoun to show its relationship with another word in the sentence. The noun or pronoun which follows a preposition is called its object.

The pronouns which are used after a preposition should be in the objective case always.

Now Understand the following sentences :

- There is some water in the bottle. (the word **in** shows the relation between two things – water and bottle.)
- He is fond of his daughter. (the word **of** shows the relation between the adjective fond and the noun daughter.)
- He fell off the ladder. (the word **off** shows the relation between the verb fell and the noun ladder.)

Although Prepositions usually come at the starting or end of a sentence, But sometimes prepositions can also come at the end of the sentences, **For example :**

- The professor asked the students to indicate the reference book they are quoting **from**. (The preposition 'From' is ending the sentence)
- The professor asked the students to indicate **from which** reference book they are quoting.

Types of prepositions

Prepositions are classified in the following categories :

1) Simple prepositions

The most common and most used prepositions come under this category. Some examples of Simple prepositions are "at, in, for, to, with, on, off, out, etc".

- He is **in** the office.
- She sat **on** the bench.
- She is angry **with** him.

2) Compound prepositions

The prepositions which are generally formed by prefixing a Preposition to a Noun, an Adjective or an Adverb are known as Compound Prepositions.

- The boys ran around the bench
- The book is inside the cupboard
- The fan is above the table

3) Phrase prepositions

Phrase prepositions are the groups of words that serve as prepositions. The words like "according to, along with, because of, in front of, by means of, on behalf of, in accordance with, in addition to, with reference to and in spite of" are called as compound prepositions.

- **Owing to** his ill health, he retired from business.
- He succeeded **by dint of** perseverance and hard work.
- She stood **in front of** the mirror.
- I can't **get along with** him.

Important Rules Of Prepositions

Following are listed the important rules of prepositions to make you understand of their correct usage.

Rule 1)

Beside and besides

Beside means 'by the side of'. **Besides** means 'in addition to'.

- They have a house beside the sea. (by the side of the sea)
- He stood beside me. (by my side)
- He plays the violin besides the piano and the guitar. (He plays three instruments.)
- Besides being a good actor, he is also a good singer. (= In addition to being a good actor, he is also a good singer.)

Rule 2)

Since and for

Since should be used with a point of time in the past. It is used with a present perfect tense. **For** is used only when you refer to a period of time.

- He has been absent since Tuesday. (NOT He has been absent for Tuesday.)
- I have been ill since last week.

- He has been absent for three days. (NOT He has been absent for three days.)
- I have been ill for two weeks.

For is also used to indicate Duration, For example :

- Incorrect: I will be attending the classes regularly since Monday.
- Correct: I will be attending the classes regularly **from** Monday.

Rule 3)

Use from to show the starting point only when the end point is also mentioned. In other cases, use since.

- Incorrect: I have been waiting from two hours.
- Correct: I have been waiting **for two hours**.

Rule 4)

Between and among

Between is used to refer to two or three separate people or things, which means when only two parties are involved. Among is used when the reference is to a group of people or things which we do not see separately which means when more than two parties are involved.

- Divide the food **among** the children.
- Divide this food between Riya and Raman.

Rule 5)

By and with

By is used to refer to the doer of the action. **With** is used to refer to the instrument with which the action is performed.

- The spider was killed by the boy.
- The boy killed the spider with a stone.

Rule 6)

In and At

In is usually used with large places – countries, districts, large cities etc. **At** is generally used for small and unimportant places like villages, small towns etc. For example :

- We shall meet him **at the club** this evening.
- His brother lives **in Paris**.

Note: This rule is not very rigidly followed. **In** is often used with small places. **At**, however, is seldom used for big places.

Rule 7)

On, in, at and by

At shows an exact point of time; **on** shows a more general point of time and **in** shows a period of time. For example :

- I have a meeting **at 4 pm**.
- The train leaves at **2 o'clock**.
- I was born **on a Monday**.
- I was born **on April 21st**.
- I was born **in January**.
- We will visit them **in the summer**.
- It is very hot **in the day** but quite cold **at night**.
- We went to school **on foot**. (Always Use 'on' with foot , using 'by' with the foot is incorrect)

By is also used to show the latest time at which an action will be finished. So it is usually used with a future tense. For example :

- I will be leaving **by 6 o'clock**.
- I hope to finish the work **by next week**.

Rule 8)

On and upon

On is generally used to talk about things at rest. **Upon** is used about things in motion. For example :

- She sat **on a chair**.
- He jumped **upon his horse**.

Rule 9)

In, within

With reference to time, **in** means at the end of a certain period; **within** means

before the end of a certain period. For example :

- I will finish writing this book **in three days**. (at the end of three days)
- I will finish writing this book **within three days**. (before the end of three days.)

Rule 10)

Into and Onto

The difference between into and onto is similar to the difference between in and on.

- He threw the hat onto the roof.
- When she kissed the frog it turned into a handsome prince.

Rule 11)

Before, across and in front of

We do not normally use **before** to talk about position/place. Instead, we use **in front of**. The opposite of in front of is behind. As a preposition, before normally indicates the time. It is the opposite of after. Across is also a preposition which means 'from one side to the other'.

- There were hundreds of people **in front of me** in the queue.
- I need to be there **before 8 pm**. (NOT I need to be there in front of 8 pm.)
- My sister lives **across the road**.

Rule 12)

Along

The proposition **along** is used with nouns that refer to things with a long thin shape. Examples are: **road, river, corridor, line**

- She ran **along** the road.
- There are trees **along** the riverside.

Commonly confused prepositions

1)About and On

Both **about** and **on** can mean 'regarding'. There is a slight difference of meaning. **About** used in the first sentence suggests that the discussion was ordinary. **On** used in the second sentence suggests that the lecture was serious or academic, suitable for specialists. For example :

- We had a discussion **about money**.
- He gave a lecture **on finance**.

2) Despite and in spite of

Despite and in spite of mean exactly the same, but despite is more common than in spite of. Both expressions are used for saying that something happens although something else might have prevented it. Both of the following sentences are correct to use

- I enjoyed the movie **despite having** a headache.
- I enjoyed the movie **in spite of having** a headache.

Note: Never use 'of' after 'despite'. Always use 'of ' after 'in spite'.

3) Above and over

Above and over can both mean 'higher than'. **Above** is preferred when one thing is not directly over another. **Over** is preferred when one thing covers or touches another.

- The water came up **above / over** our waist.
- There is a temple **above** the lake. (The temple is not directly over the lake.)
- He put on a sweater **over** his shirt. (NOT He put on a sweater above his shirt.)

In measurements of temperature and height, we use **above**. In measurements of ages and speeds, we use **over**.

- The temperature never rose **above** 5 degrees Celsius.
- You have to be **over** 18 to see that film.

4) Across and through

The difference between **across** and **through** is similar to the difference meaning **on** and **in**. **Through** is used for movement in a three dimensional space, with things on all sides. Across cannot be used with that meaning. For example :

- We went **through** the wood. (We were in the wood.)
- The road goes **through** the forest.
- We walked **across** the desert. (We were on the desert.)

5) Across and over can both be used to mean 'on the other side of a line/road/bridge etc'. We prefer **over** when we say 'on/to the other side of something high'. We prefer **across** when we say 'on/to the other side of something flat'.

- There is a hospital **across/over** the border. (= There is a hospital on the other side of the border.)
- His shop is **across / over** the road. (= His shop is on the other side of the road.)
- He jumped **across / over** the stream.
- He climbed **over** the wall. (NOT He climbed across the wall.)
- We swam **across** the river. (NOT We swam over the river.)

6) Along and through

To talk about periods or activities, we prefer **through**. **Along** when used as a preposition is followed by a noun. **Along** is used to talk about movement on or beside a line. **Along** is used with nouns like road, river, line etc: words that refer to things with a long thin shape.

- We walked along the road.
- She was silent all **through** the journey. (NOT She was silent all along the journey.)

7) Compare to and compare with

To show likeness, **compare** is usually used with **to**. To show differences, **compare** is usually used with 'with'. As a general rule, use **compare with** when differences are more important than similarities. Use **compare to** when similarities are more important.

- She likes to **compare herself to** her mother.
- We can't **compare dogs with** cats. (There are far more differences between them than there are similarities.)

Now try to answer the following questions to test your knowledge of Prepositions. Leave your answers in the comment section which will be reviewed by us.

1. I have known him our school days. (For/Since/From)
2. I was waiting the bus stop when I met Larry.
(At/On/In/From)
3. There is no way proving that he was lying
(To/Of/For/By)
4. She spent years caring her sick husband (About/For/Of)

5. He has yet to recover his illness. (Of/From/With/Off)
6. We had a long discussion politics. (About/At/For)

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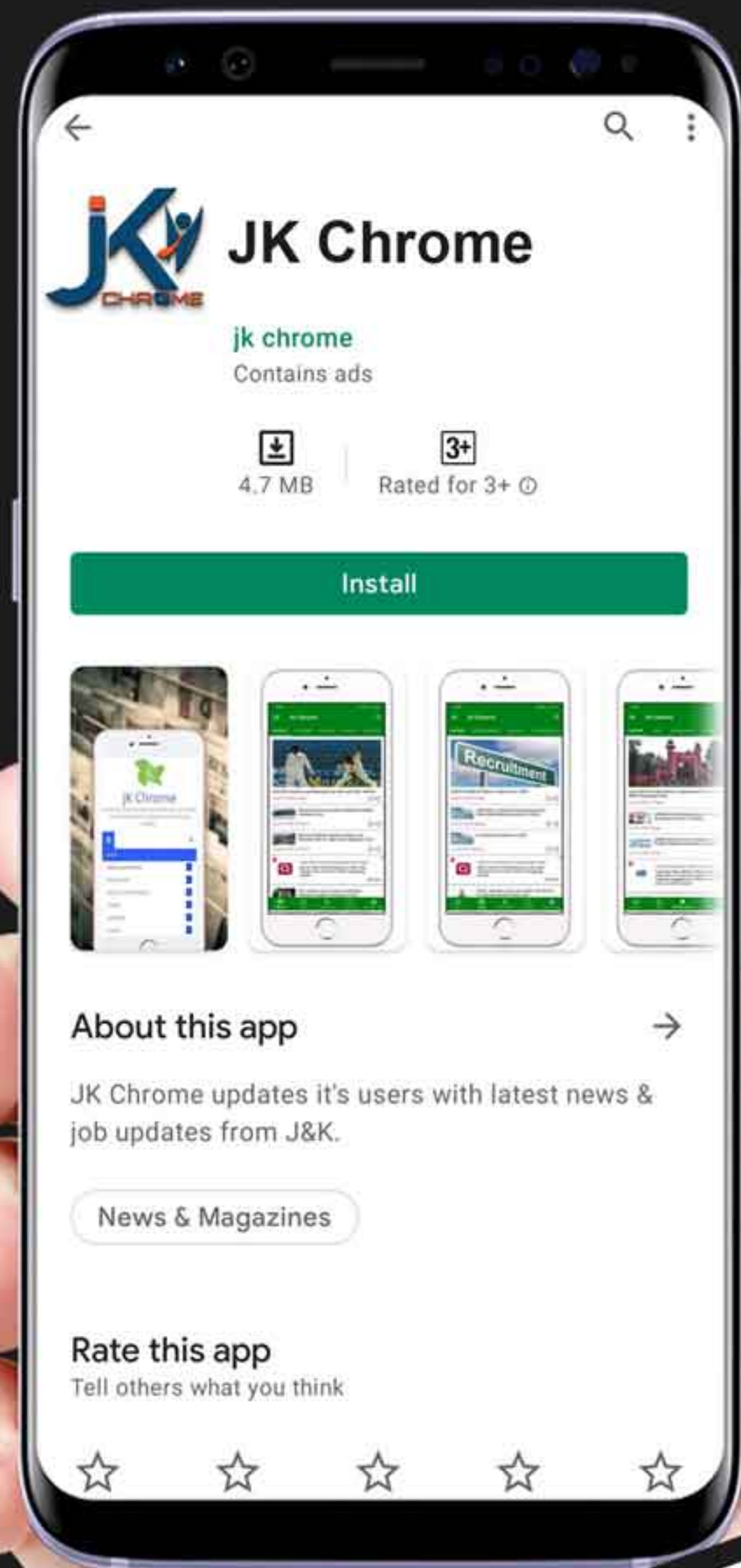
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