

Prepositions are used to establish relationships between nouns, between nouns and verbs, and between different parts of a sentence.

À (to) and de (from, about) are the most common prepositions in French. They form [contractions with definite articles](#): Tex parle **aux** étudiants. Il parle **des** devoirs. Il regarde la question en haut **du** tableau. (Tex talks to the students. He is talking about homework. He is looking at the question at the top of the blackboard.)

When prepositions have literal, spatial meanings, using them is straightforward: **sur** (on), **sous** (under), **avec** (with), **sans** (without). There are, in addition, many idiomatic uses of prepositions, especially **à** and **de**. Dictionaries include listings of idiomatic meanings.

In addition to prepositions + noun (or pronoun) objects, discussed here, there are specific guidelines for using [prepositions with place names](#). Finally, many prepositions, including some on this page, may be followed by [infinitives](#).

1. a-b-c
2. d-e-f
3. g-h-i-j-k-l
4. m-n-o-p
5. q-r-s-t-u-v



• **à = to, at**

See [contractions with definite articles](#), the use of **à** with [place names](#), and **à + infinitive**.

Tex parle **à** ses amis **au** café. Ils vont **à** Opelousas.

Tex is talking **to** his friends **at** the café.
They're going **to** Opelousas.

• **à cause de = because of, due to**

The preposition **à cause de** is followed by a noun, whereas the conjunction **parce que** (because) is followed by a subordinate clause.

Ils vont en Louisiane **à cause de** la fête.

They're going to Louisiana **because of** the celebration.

• **au centre de = at the center of**

Opelousas se trouve **au centre de** la Louisiane.

Opelousas is **in the center of** Louisiana.



- **à côté de = beside**

Bette veut s'asseoir **à côté de** Tex.

Bette wants to sit **beside** Tex.

- **à droite de = to the right of, on the right of**

Tammy est **à droite de** PawPaw Louis.

Tammy is **on** PawPaw Louis' **right**.

- **à gauche de = to the left of, on the left of**

Tex est **à gauche de** PawPaw.

Tex is **on** PawPaw's **left**.

- **après = after (temporal)**

See also **après** used in **past infinitive constructions**.

Après le dîner, ils vont danser.

After dinner, they're going dancing.

- **à travers = across, through**

Tammy voit Bette **à travers** la foule.

Tammy sees Bette **through** the crowd.

- **au milieu de = in the middle of**

PawPaw danse **au milieu de** la salle.

PawPaw is dancing **in the middle of** the room.



- **au sujet de / à propos de = on the subject of; about**

Paw-Paw parle **au sujet de** la Résistance et **à propos de** sa longue vie de séducteur.

PawPaw is talking **about** the Resistance and **about** his long life as a womanizer.

- **autour de = surrounding, around**

Les amis sont assis **autour de** la table.

The friends are seated around the table.

- **avant = before [temporal]**

Contrast **avant** with **devant** meaning 'before' in a spatial sense. See also **avant de + infinitive**.

Ils ne vont pas se coucher **avant** cinq heures du matin.

They are not going to bed **before** five o'clock in the morning.

- **avec = with**

Avec + noun is often translated as an '-ly' adverb: **avec** joie (joyfully).

Tex est en Louisiane **avec** ses amis. Ils dansent **avec joie** à l'anniversaire de PawPaw.

Tex is in Louisiana **with** his friends. They are dancing **joyfully** at PawPaw's birthday celebration.

• **chez** = 'at X's (house), at the house of, at the store of; to X's (house), to the store of'

Chez may refer to individual's homes as well as to someone's shop, as in the first example below. When applied to larger groups of people, such as nationalities, it means among: **Chez** nous les Texans, on adore la sauce piquante = "We Texans love hot sauce" (literally: Among us Texans we love hot sauce).

Le lendemain matin, ils vont acheter des croissants **chez** le boulanger.

The next morning they are going to buy croissants **at** the baker's.

Tout le monde a adoré le séjour **chez** Paw-Paw.

Everyone loved their stay **at** Paw-Paw's.

Après un an à Austin, Tex se sent vraiment à l'aise **chez** les Texans.

After a year in Austin, Tex really feels at ease **with (among)** Texans.

• **contre** = against

Contre is used in several idiomatic expressions.

Bette a dansé tout **contre** Tex.

Bette danced right **against** Tex.

Tammy est en colère **contre** Bette; elle se fâche **contre** Tex.

Tammy is mad **at** Bette; she's getting angry **with** Tex.

Tammy est **contre** la bigamie.

Tammy is **against** bigamy.



• **dans** = in

Dans is always followed by a determiner (definite, indefinite or possessive). See also **en**.

Tammy est **dans** la cuisine. Elle prépare le dîner pour Tex qui arrive **dans** une heure.

Tammy's **in** the kitchen. She's cooking dinner for Tex who's coming **in** one hour.

• **d'après** = according to

D'après Edouard, les Américains mangent très mal. Mais Tammy cuisine bien!

According to Edouard, Americans eat very poorly. But Tammy cooks well.



D'APRÈS EDOUARD,
LES AMÉRICAINS
MANGENT TRÈS MAL.

- **de = of, from, about**

See also the use of **de** with [place names](#) and [de + infinitive](#).

Au dîner, Tex et Tammy parlent **de** leur voyage en Louisiane.

At dinner, Tex and Tammy talk **about** their trip to Louisiana.

- **de l'autre côté de = on the other side of**

Puis ils font une promenade et regardent les gratte-ciel **de l'autre côté du** fleuve.

Then they take a walk and look at the skyscrapers **on the other side of** the river.

- **derrière = in back of, behind (spatial)**

Ils admirent le soleil se coucher **derrière** les collines.

They admire the sun setting **behind** the hills.

- **devant = in front of, before (spatial sense)**

Contrast **devant** with **avant** (temporal sense).

Enfin, ils s'embrassent passionnément **devant** le Capitole.

Finally, they kiss passionately **in front of** the Capitol.

- **en = in**

En means 'in' and immediately precedes the noun (i.e., it does not require a determiner; it is followed directly by its object, for example, **en** France). It is also used in many idiomatic expressions: Tex roule **en** voiture (Tex is driving in a car); Trey vient **en** vélo (Trey comes on a bike); and in some time expressions: **en** automne (in the fall); **en** août (in August). Compare with **dans**.

See also the use of **en** with [place names](#) and **en** with a [present participle](#).

- **en bas de = at the bottom of, at the end of**

Ils prennent un verre dans un bar **en bas de** la cinquième rue.

They have a drink in a bar **at the end of** Fifth Street.

- **en dehors de = outside of, excluding**

En dehors de Tammy, Tex ne connaît pas beaucoup de Texans.

Outside of Tammy, Tex doesn't know many Texans.

- **en dépit de = in spite of**

En dépit de l'alcool, Tex se conduit en gentleman.

In spite of the alcohol, Tex behaves like a gentleman.

EN DÉPIT
DE L'ALCOOL, TEX
SE CONDUIT EN
GENTLEMAN



- **en face de** = in front of, across from

Tex est assis **en face de** Tammy.

Tex is (seated) **across from** Tammy.

- **en haut de** = at the top of; to the top of

Tout d'un coup Bette apparaît **en haut de** l'escalier.

All of a sudden, Bette appears **at the top of** the staircase.

- **entre** = between

Entre means 'between' and it is used when referring to two people or things (or two groups of people or things). Contrast with **parmi** ('among').

Puis elle vient s'asseoir **entre** Tammy et Tex.

Then she comes and sits down **between** Tammy and Tex.

- **envers** = toward (figurative sense)

Envers means 'toward' in a figurative sense, indicating an attitude or gesture toward someone. Contrast with **vers**, which means toward in a spatial or temporal sense.

Tammy ressent une certaine antipathie **envers** Bette.

Tammy feels a certain animosity toward Bette.



- **grace à** = thanks to

Tex a découvert son grand-père **grace à** l'album de photos de Rita.

Tex discovered his grandfather **thanks to** Rita's photo album.

- **hors de** = outside of, out of (idiomatic)

Paw-Paw habite **hors de** la ville d'Opelousas. Il est **hors de** question que Tex vive à Opelousas.

Paw-Paw lives **outside of** the city of Opelousas. It is **out of** the question that Tex live in Opelousas.

- **jusqu'à** = until

Distinguish between the preposition **jusqu'à** and the conjunction **jusqu'à ce que**.

Tex et Tammy vont **jusqu'à** Opelousas.

Tex and Tammy are going **as far as** Opelousas.



TEX HABITE LOIN DE SON
GRAND-PÈRE PAWPAW LOUIS

- **loin de** = far from

Tex habite **loin de** son grand-père Paw-Paw Louis.

Tex lives **far from** his grandfather Paw-Paw Louis.



- **malgré** = in spite of

Malgré la distance, Tex aime aller voir son grand-père.

In spite of the distance, Tex likes to go see his grandfather.

- **par** = by, through, per

Par has several idiomatic meanings. It means 'by' when it is used with the **passive voice**. See also the use of **par + infinitive**.

Tex va à Opelousas une fois **par** mois.

Tex goes to Opelousas once a month (one time **per** month).

Tex est invité à Opelousas **par** Paw-Paw.

Tex is invited to Opelousas **by** Paw-Paw.

Pour aller à Opelousas, Tex passe **par** Houston.

Tex goes **through** Houston to get to Opelousas.

- **parmi** = among

Parmi means 'among' and it is used when referring to three or more people or things (or groups of people or things). Contrast with **entre** (between).

Tex compte beaucoup de Cajuns **parmi** ses cousins.

Tex counts many Cajuns **among** his cousins.

- **pendant** = during

Pendant son séjour chez Paw-Paw, Tex mange des écrevisses.

During his stay with Paw-Paw, Tex eats crawfish.

- **pour** = for, in favor of

See also the use of **pour + infinitive**.

Paw-Paw est **pour** la défense du Cajun. **Pour** lui, le français est la plus belle langue du

Paw-Paw is **in favor of** the defense of Cajun. **For** him, French is the most beautiful

monde.

language in the world.

- **près de** = near to

Opelousas est **près de** Baton Rouge.

Opelousas is **near** Baton Rouge.



- **quant à** = as for

Paw-Paw est content de voir Tex. **Quant à** Tex, il est heureux de pouvoir enfin parler français.

Paw-Paw is happy to see Tex. **As for** Tex, he is happy to finally be able to speak French.

- **sans** = without

Sans often is translated by '-less' or a negative prefix 'in-' or 'un-': un travail **sans** effort (effort**less** work); un film **sans** intérêt (an **un**interesting film). See also the use of **sans** + infinitive.

Sans doute, le français se parle dans sa famille depuis longtemps.

Without doubt, French has spoken in his family for a long time.



- **sauf** = except

Toute sa famille parle français, **sauf** son oncle Elmer, qui habite en Californie.

Everyone in his family speaks, **except** Uncle Elmer, who lives in California.

- **selon** = according to

Selon Paw-Paw, Tex a un drôle d'accent français.

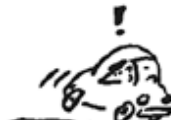
According to Paw-Paw, Tex has a funny French accent.

- **sous** = under, in (idiomatic)

Sous means 'under,' but it is often translated by 'in' in expressions such as **sous** la pluie (**in** the rain); **sous** le soleil (**in** the sun).

En route pour Opelousas, Tex et Tammy ont vu un alligator **sous** un pont.

On the road to Opelousas, Tex and Tammy saw an alligator **under** a bridge.





• **sur** = on, upon, on top of

Sur means 'on,' but it is also used in several idiomatic expressions: un **sur** deux (one **out of** two); tourner son attention **sur** quelque chose (to turn one's attention **to** something); **sur** le moment (**at** the time); **sur** invitation (**by** invitation). etc.

En Louisiane, on sert souvent des écrevisses directement **sur** la table, sans assiette.

In Louisiana, crawfish are often served directly **on** the table, with no plate.

• **vers** = toward(s)

Vers means 'toward, around' in both a spatial and a temporal sense. Contrast with **envers**, which has a figurative sense.

Vers midi, Tex et Tammy repartent **vers** Austin.

Around noon, Tex and Tammy head back towards Austin.



Bette et Tammy entrent **dans** un restaurant ensemble. Elles ont toutes les deux pris rendez-vous **avec** Tex **sans** le savoir! Elles regardent **autour de** la salle. En même temps, elles aperçoivent Tex assis **à** une table. Elles se précipitent **vers** lui. Elles se regardent, hésitent un moment, puis s'asseyent. Tammy s'assied **à droite de** Tex et Bette s'assied **à gauche de** lui. Elles se regardent à nouveau d'un air confus. Tex s'amuse **malgré** le drame **entre** Bette et Tammy.

Bette and Tammy enter a restaurant together. Unknowingly, they both have a date **with** Tex. They look **around** the room. At the same time they see Tex seated **at** a table. They rush **towards** him. They look at each other, hesitate a moment, then sit down. Tammy sits **on** Tex' **right** and Bette sits down **to** his **left**. They look at each other again, confused. Tex is having fun **in spite of** the drama **between** Bette and Tammy.



Exercices

fill in the blanks

Fill in the blank with the correct preposition.

1. Tex et Tammy vont _____ Opelousas pour rendre visite à Paw-Paw. (à, de, pour)
2. Opelousas se trouve _____ la Louisiane. (à droite de, au centre de, devant)
3. Bette adore danser _____ Tex. (à, avec, par)
4. _____ Paw-Paw, le français est la plus belle langue du monde. (sauf, selon, vers)
5. Tammy se fâche _____ Tex, quand il offre des fleurs à Bette. (à, de, contre)
6. Opelousas se trouve _____ Baton Rouge. (dans, derrière, près de)
7. Edouard prend toujours un café _____ son dîner. (après, dans, devant)
8. Paw-Paw parle souvent _____ ses aventures pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale. (à, de, avec)

9. Edouard est serveur. Il travaille _____ un restaurant français. (dans, en, sur)
10. Il y a un écureuil et un escargot _____ les copains de Tex. (parmi, pour, quant à)
11. Paw-Paw arrose des fleurs qui poussent dans le jardin _____ sa maison. (avant, devant, entre)
12. Tex et ses amis restent _____ Paw-Paw en Louisiane. (à, chez, vers)