



Mini-lesson 46: Prepositional Phrases (e.g., *by chance*, *in time*)

Objective

To help students recognize and correctly use **common prepositional phrases** that function as adverbials of time, manner, cause, or condition.

Explanation

A **prepositional phrase** begins with a **preposition** (e.g., *in*, *at*, *by*, *on*) and ends with a **noun or pronoun**. These phrases often answer questions like *when*, *how*, *where*, and *why*.

Some prepositional phrases are fixed expressions and must be learned **as a whole**.

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20 Common Prepositional Phrases (with Meanings & Examples)

Phrase	Meaning / Use	Example Sentence
by chance	accidentally	I met her <i>by chance</i> .
in time	early enough	We got there <i>in time</i> .
on time	at the scheduled time	The meeting started <i>on time</i> .
by mistake	accidentally	I deleted the file <i>by mistake</i> .
on purpose	intentionally	He broke the vase <i>on purpose</i> .
at risk	in danger	The species is <i>at risk</i> .
under pressure	feeling stress	She works well <i>under pressure</i> .
in a hurry	rushed	He left <i>in a hurry</i> .
by hand	manually	These were made <i>by hand</i> .
at once	immediately	Come here <i>at once</i> !
on duty	working (as a job)	The doctor is <i>on duty</i> now.
off duty	not working	The police officer is <i>off duty</i> .
in the end	finally, after everything	<i>In the end</i> , we won.
at the moment	right now	I'm busy <i>at the moment</i> .
on the way	going somewhere	I'm <i>on the way</i> to school.
in trouble	having problems	He's <i>in trouble</i> with the law.
on fire	burning	The house is <i>on fire</i> !
in charge of	responsible for	She's <i>in charge of</i> the team.
out of order	not working	The elevator is <i>out of order</i> .
at the end (of)	final point in space/time	We sat <i>at the end of</i> the table.



Practice Exercise

Choose the correct prepositional phrase from the box to complete each sentence. Use each one once.

by chance – in time – on time – by mistake – on purpose – at risk – under pressure – in a hurry – by hand – at once – on duty – off duty – in the end – at the moment – on the way – in trouble – on fire – in charge of – out of order – at the end of

1. She dropped the glass _____.
2. I called him _____, but he was already gone.
3. The printer is _____, so I can't print the document.
4. I met my best friend totally _____.
5. The teacher was _____ when the student arrived.
6. I'm not available to talk _____.
7. The machine was built _____, not by a robot.
8. He's always calm, even _____.
9. The cake arrived _____ for the party.
10. Don't worry—we'll get there _____.
11. The children were _____ for cheating.
12. The forest is _____ because of the fire.
13. The firefighter is _____ now, so she can't leave.
14. The dog barked so much it woke me up _____.
15. My phone is _____—it won't turn on.
16. We stopped for gas _____ to the airport.
17. Who is _____ cleaning the classroom?
18. I didn't mean to send that file—it was _____.
19. He pushed the chair _____ to scare her.
20. _____, they decided to stay home.



✓ Answer Key

1. on purpose
2. in time
3. out of order
4. by chance
5. on duty
6. at the moment
7. by hand
8. under pressure
9. on time
10. in a hurry
11. in trouble
12. at risk
13. on duty
14. at once
15. out of order
16. on the way
17. in charge of
18. by mistake
19. on purpose
20. In the end

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