

Grammar Tip #7: How to help your students navigate prepositions of directions

GIVING DIRECTIONS WITH IN/AT/ON (Beginner to Advanced)

Teaching word patterns and finding fun, realistic ways to practice *in*, *at*, and *on* when asking for and giving directions will help your students feel more confident and make their speaking more accurate. This activity is useful for all student levels.

Prepositions for directions and locations

in + **neighborhood/area** I live *in* **Southside**.

+ **city/town** I live *in* **Columbus**.

+ **state/province** Jake lives *in* **Missouri**.
What province is **Calgary** *in*?

+ **country** Paris is *in* **France**.
What country is **Stockholm** *in*?

on + **street** Jake lives *on* **4th Avenue**.
The Orpheum theater is *on* **Birch Street**.
What street is the **Post Office** *on*?

at + **address** Tom lives *at* **123 Main Street**.

+ **specific place** Let's meet *at* **Central Café**.

Preposition combinations

Tom lives *at* **123 Main Street** *in* **Tucson**.

Can we meet *at* **the diner** *on* **Center Street**?

MATERIALS/PREPARATION: Make a copy of the “Prepositions for Directions and Locations / Prepositions Combinations” chart for each student. When I use this activity, I put a poster up in my class in addition to the handouts, so students easily get support throughout the activity from multiple places. I recommend leaving space to add student examples.

Find/Make a campus map, a map of the town center, or something similar. Six to ten places should be labeled, such as a favorite coffee shop, the post office, the library, a popular store, a local park, and a subway station. You will need one map for every three students. You can also post/project the map at the front of the classroom.

STEP 1: As a class, review the poster/handout with the prepositions for directions and locations.

STEP 2: Ask students some location/direction questions like the ones below:

- Where is your house/apartment?
- Where does your best friend live?
- Where is your favorite restaurant?
- Where do people go out at night?
- How do you get to the bus stop from here?

Use their answers to add more example sentences to each section of the chart.

STEP 3: Put students in groups of three and give each group a map. Ask each group to choose a navigator (the one with the map), a questioner (the one who will ask questions about directions/locations), and a monitor (the one who keeps score of prepositions used correctly). You will be the timer for the class.

STEP 4: Set a time limit for each “round.” When the activity starts, the questioner will ask questions like the ones in Step 2 about three locations on the map. The navigator will answer each question using *at/in/on* when appropriate. The monitor will listen and write down a point each time the questioner or navigator uses any of the three prepositions of location correctly. Keep separate point totals for each student in the group.

NOTE: For lower levels, students may only be able to ask and answer one or two questions for each location. E.g. *Where is the public library?* For higher levels, students should be able to ask a series of questions for each location. E.g. *What’s your favorite sushi restaurant? What neighborhood is it in? How can I get there from here?* Adjust the time limit as necessary.

STEP 5: When time is up, tell students to switch roles. Repeat so that each student in the group gets the chance to play each role.

STEP 6: Calculate the points for each student and for each group. The student with the most points wins the individual award. The group with the most points wins the team award.