

PREPOSITIONS (TIME)

AT – IN – ON

at for the time of day:	on for days and dates:	in for longer periods (for example: months/years/seasons):	
at five o'clock	on Friday	in October	in 1998
at 11.45	on Fridays	in the 18th century	in the past
at midnight	on 16 May 2009	in (the) winter	in the 1990s
at lunchtime	on Christmas Day	in the Middle Ages	
at sunset etc	on my birthday	in (the) future	

- **AT**

Use **at** in these expressions:

at night	<i>I don't like working at night.</i>
at the weekend/at weekends	<i>Will you be here at the weekend?</i>
at Christmas	<i>Do you give each other presents at Christmas?</i>
at the moment/at present	<i>I'm busy at the moment - The manager isn't here at the moment/at present</i>
at the same time	<i>Kate and I arrived at the same time</i>

- **IN**

in the morning(s)	<i>I'll see you in the morning.</i>
in the afternoon(s)	I usually walk the dog in the afternoon
in the evening(s)	<i>Do you work in the evenings?</i>

BUT:

on Monday/Friday morning(s); **on Sunday** afternoon (s) **on Monday** evening(s) etc.: *I'll see you **on** Friday morning.* - *Do you work **on** Saturday evenings -*

In a few minutes - **in** six months etc.

*The train will be leaving **in** a few minutes.* (= a few minutes from now)

*Andy has gone away. He'll be back **in** a week.* (= a week from now)

*They'll be here **in** a moment.* (= a moment from now)

You can also say: **in six months' time**, **in a week's time** etc.

*They're getting married **in six months' time** OR ... **in six months.***

Also use **in** to say **how long it takes to do something**: *I learnt to drive **in** 4 weeks.* (= it took me 4 weeks to learn)

- **NO PREPOSITIONS**

We do not use **at/on/in** before **last/next/this/every**: *I'll see you **next** Friday.* (NOT: on next Friday)

*They got married **last** March.*

In spoken English we often leave out **on** before days (Sunday/Monday etc.). So you can say:

*I'll see you **on** Friday OR I'll see you Friday - I don't work **on** Monday mornings OR I don't work Monday mornings.*

- **On time and in time**

On time = punctual, not late. If something happens on time, it happens at the time that was planned:

The 11.45 train left **on** time. (= it left at 11.45)

I'll meet you at 7.30.' 'OK, but please be **on** time.' (= don't be late, be there at 7.30)

The conference was well-organised. Everything began and finished **on time**. (= punctually)

The opposite of on time is late: *Be **on** time. Don't be late.*

In time (for something/ to do something) = soon enough:

*Will you be home **in time** for dinner?* (=soon enough for dinner)

*I've sent Tracey a birthday present. I hope it arrives **in time** (for her birthday)* (=on or before her birthday)

*I'm in a hurry. I want to get home **in time** to see the game on TV.* (= soon enough to see the game)

The opposite of in time is too late: *I got home **too late** to see the game on TV.*

Just in time (= almost too late): *We got to the station **just in time** for our train. - I managed to stop **just in time.***

- **At the end and in the end**

At the end (of something) = *at the time when something ends: at the end of the month - at the end of the film - at the end of January - at the end of the course - at the end of the game - at the end of the concert*

The opposite of at the end (of ...) is **at the beginning** (of ...):

*I'm going away **at the beginning of** January. (NOT: in the beginning)*

In the end = finally.

We do not say 'in the end of ...'. So you **cannot say** *'in the end of January' or 'in the end of the concert'.*

We use **in the end** when we say what the final result of a situation was:

We had a lot of problems with our car. We sold it **in the end.** (= finally we sold it)

He got more and more angry. **In the end** he just walked out of the room.

Alan couldn't decide where to go for his holidays. He didn't go anywhere **in the end.** (NOT: at the end)

The opposite of in the end is usually at first:

***At first** we didn't get on very well, but **in the end** we became good friends.*

EXERCISE

Put in at, on or in.

- 1 Mozart was born in Salzburg 1756.
- 2 I've been invited to a wedding 14 February.
- 3 Electricity prices are going up October
- 4 weekends, we often go for long walks in the country.
- 5 I haven't seen Kate for a few days. I last saw her Tuesday.
- 6 Jonathan is 63. He'll be retiring from his job two years' time.
- 7 I'm busy right now, but I'll be with you a moment.
- 8 My brother is an engineer, but he doesn't have a job the moment.
- 9 There are usually a lot of parties New Year's Eve.
- 10 I don't like driving night.
- 11 My car is being repaired at the garage. It will be ready two hours.
- 12 My phone and the doorbell rang the same time.
- 13 Mary and David always go out for dinner their wedding anniversary.
- 14 It was a short book and easy to read. I read it a day.
- 15 Saturday night I went to bed midnight.
- 16 We travelled overnight and arrived 5 o'clock the morning.
- 17 The course begins 7 January and ends sometime April.
- 18 I might not be at home Tuesday morning, but I'll be there the afternoon.

Which is correct: a, b, or both of them?

A	B	A/B/BOTH
I'll see you on Friday.	I'll see you Friday.	
I'll see you on next Friday.	I'll see you next Friday.	
Paul got married in April.	Paul got married April.	
They never go out on Sunday evenings.	They never go out Sunday evenings.	
We often have a short holiday on Christmas.	We often have a short holiday at Christmas.	
What are you doing the weekend?	What are you doing at the weekend?	
Will you be here on Tuesday?	Will you be here Tuesday?	
We were ill at the same time	We were ill in the same time	
Sue got married at 18 May 2008	Sue got married on 18 May 2008.	
He left school last June	He left school in last June	

Complete the sentences with on time or in time.

- 1 The bus was late this morning, but it's usually
- 2 The film was supposed to start at 8.30, but it didn't begin
- 3 I like to get up to have a big breakfast before going to work.
- 4 We want to start the meeting, so please don't be late.

- 5 I've just washed this shirt. I want to wear it this evening, so I hope it will be dry.....
- 6 The tram. service isn't very good. The trams are rarely
- 7 I nearly missed my flight this morning. I got to the airport just
- 8 I almost forgot that it was Joe's birthday. Fortunately, I remembered
- 9 Why are you never? You always keep everybody waiting.

Put in at or in.

- 1 I'm going away the end of the month.
- 2 It took me a long time to find a job the end I got a job in a hotel.
- 3 Are you going away the beginning of August or the end?
- 4 I couldn't decide what to buy Laura for her birthday. I didn't buy her anything the end.
- 5 We waited ages for a taxi. We gave up the end and walked home.
- 6 I'll be moving to a new address the end of September.
- 7 We had a few problems at first, but the end everything was OK.
- 8 I'm going away the end of this week.
- 9 A: "I didn't know what to do." - B: "Yes, you were in a difficult position. What did you do the end?"

KEY

Put in at, on or in.

- 1 Mozart was born in SalzburgIN.... 1756.
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- 13 Mary and David always go out for dinner ...ON.. their wedding anniversary.
- 14 It was a short book and easy to read. I read it ...IN. a day.
- 15ON.. Saturday night I went to bedAT.. midnight. *Saturday night.....*
- 16 We travelled overnight and arrived ...AT.. 5 o'clock ...IN.. the morning.
- 17 The course beginsON.... 7 January and ends sometimeIN.... April.
- 18 I might not be at homeON.... Tuesday morning, but I'll be there ..IN... the afternoon.

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I'll see you on Friday.	I'll see you Friday.	BOTH
I'll see you on next Friday.	I'll see you next Friday.	B
Paul got married in April.	Paul got married April.	A
They never go out on Sunday evenings.	They never go out Sunday evenings.	BOTH
We often have a short holiday on Christmas.	We often have a short holiday at Christmas.	B
What are you doing the weekend?	What are you doing at the weekend?	B
Will you be here on Tuesday?	Will you be here Tuesday?	BOTH
We were ill at the same time	We were ill in the same time	A
Sue got married at 18 May 2008	Sue got married on 18 May 2008.	B
He left school last June	He left school in last June	A

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