

## A complete and categorized list of common preposition mistakes in IELTS Writing Task 2, with explanations and examples.

### A. CONFUSING VERB + PREPOSITION COMBINATIONS

These are fixed collocations that often cause errors.

Verb	Wrong Preposition	Correct Preposition	Example
discuss	about	(no preposition)	We must discuss the issue.
mention	about	(no preposition)	He mentioned the new policy.
emphasize	on	(no preposition)	The report emphasizes the need for change.
approach	to	(no preposition)	We need a new approach solving this.
affect	on	(no preposition)	Stress can affect health.
lack (verb)	of	(no preposition)	Many countries lack resources.
address	about	(no preposition)	The government must address poverty.
influence	to	(no preposition)	Media can influence public opinion.
contact	with	(no preposition)	Please contact the office.
reach	to	(no preposition)	They reached an agreement.
enter	into (a place)	(no preposition)	They entered the building.

await	for	(no preposition)	We await your response.
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### Study the following sentences. Wrong prepositions are highlighted.

depend	of, from	on/upon	Success depends on effort.
rely	to	on	We rely on technology.
concentrate	to	on	Students must concentrate on their studies.
focus	in, to	on	The debate focused on education.
comment	for	on	She commented on the proposal.
insist	for	on	He insisted on his point.
congratulate	for	on	I congratulated her on her success.
spend (time/money)	for	on	They spend money on entertainment.
invest	to	in	It is wise to invest in education.
believe	to (a thing)	in (a concept)	I believe in equality.
specialize	on	in	He specializes in economics.
participate	at	in	Everyone can participate in the event.
succeed	on	in	She succeeded in passing the exam.
result (verb)	to	in	Hard work results in success.
apologize	for (the person)	to (person) for (action)	He apologized to me for being late.
agree	with (a plan) incorrectly	to (a plan/idea) with (a person) on (a topic)	I agree with you on this issue.
listen	the music	to	We listen to music.
wait	the bus	for	I am waiting for the bus.
pay	the bill	for (a thing)	I paid for the meal.
apply	a job	for (a position) to (an institution)	She applied for a job at the company.
search	the key	for (looking for something)	They searched for information.
look (search)	an answer	for	He is looking for a new job.
blame	on (someone incorrectly)	(someone) for (something)	They blamed him for the mistake.
provide	someone something	someone with something	

something to someone | Schools provide students with books. |

| compare | each other | A with B

A to B (for similarities) | Compared with the past, life is easier. |

## B. CONFUSING NOUN + PREPOSITION COMBINATIONS

Noun	Wrong	Correct	Example
reason	about, because of	for	The reason for pollution is clear.
solution	of	to	We need a solution to this problem.
answer	of	to	The answer to the question is complex.
key	for (a solution)	to	Education is the key to development.
response	of	to	His response to the crisis was slow.
attitude	for	towards	His attitude towards work is positive.
advantage disadvantage	for	of	The advantages of technology are many.
awareness	for	of	We need to raise awareness of the issue.
knowledge	in, for	of	She has good knowledge of history.
example	about	of	This is a good example of cooperation.

experience	in (a field) wrongly	in (field) of (something)	He has experience in marketing.
impact effect influence	in, to	on	Social media has an impact on youth.
increase decrease rise fall	of (when followed by <i>in</i> )	in	There was a sharp increase in prices.
difference	from (sometimes confused)	between (two things) in (an aspect)	There is a difference between them.
contrast	with	to / with (both correct)	In contrast to the past, we now have the internet.

### C. CONFUSING ADJECTIVE + PREPOSITION COMBINATIONS

Adjective	Wrong	Correct	Example
interested	for	in	She is interested in science.
good bad excellent	in (performance )	at (a skill/activity)	He is good at mathematics.
responsible	for (a task)	for (task) to (person/boss)	Parents are responsible for their children.
famous	for (wrong context)	for (achievement )	The city is famous for its architecture.

afraid scared terrified	from	of	Many people are afraid of failure.
full	with	of	The report is full of errors.
crowded	by	with	The streets are crowded with people.
satisfied happy pleased	from	with	I am satisfied with the result.
similar	with	to	Your idea is similar to mine.
different	than (American) from (sometime s wrong)	from (UK/IELTS standard)	Life today is different from the past.
concerned	for (general worry) about (specific)	about (worried) with (involved in)	I am concerned about the environment.
dependent	of	on	Children are dependent on their parents.
independen t	from	of	He is financially independen t of his family.
capable	to	of	She is capable of great things.
proud	for	of	They are proud of their heritage.

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## D. GENERAL PREPOSITION ERRORS (Time, Place, Phrases)

Context	Wrong	Correct	Example
Opinion Phrases	To my opinion	In my opinion From my perspective	In my view, this is important.
Linking Phrases	In the other hand	On the other hand	On the one hand... on the other hand...
Contrary Phrases	Contrary with	Contrary to	Contrary to popular belief, it is not easy.
According to	According with	According to	According to the report, levels are rising.
Time: Century/Decade	at the 20th century	in the 20th century in the 1990s	In the 21st century, technology boomed.
Time: Specific Time	in 3 o'clock	at 3 o'clock at noon/night/midnight	The meeting starts at 9 a.m.
Time: Day/Date	at Monday in 5th May	on Monday on 5th May on Christmas Day	The event is on Friday.
Time: Period	in the morning/afternoon/evening	in the morning in 2024 in	I study in the evening.

	in 2024 in summer	summer (correct as is)	
Place: City/Country	at London at China	in London in China	She lives in Paris.
Place: Specific Location	in the bus stop in the library (as a building)	at the bus stop at the library (as a point)	Meet me at the station.
Place: Surface/Platform	in the internet in television	on the internet on television	You can find it on the website.
Transport: General	with car with foot	by car/bus/train (general) on foot	I travel by bus.
Transport: Specific	in the bus (when inside) on the bus (as a service)	on the bus/train/plane in the car/taxi	He is on the train now.
Communication	by the phone (instrument) on the phone (conversation)	on the phone (talking)	She is on the phone.
Aim/Purpose	aim for reducing	aim to reduce (verb+infinitive) with the aim of reducing (noun phrase)	The law aims to protect citizens.

## E. TIPS TO AVOID THESE MISTAKES

1. **Learn in Chunks:** Don't memorize single words. Memorize the whole phrase (e.g., *depend on, interested in, impact on*).
2. **Use an English-English Dictionary:** Check collocations (which prepositions follow verbs/nouns/adjectives).
3. **Practice with Flashcards:** Create cards with the full correct phrase on one side.
4. **Proofread Specifically for Prepositions:** In your final 5 minutes of the IELTS writing test, scan your essay *only* for these common preposition errors.
5. **When in Doubt, Simplify:** If you are unsure of the correct preposition, try rephrasing the sentence to avoid it.
  - ✗ Uncertain: *He complained on the service.*
  - ✓ Rephrased: *He complained about the service.* (Better: *He said the service was bad.*)

## Multiple-Choice Preposition Exercises

### Section A: Verb + Preposition

Choose the correct preposition to complete the sentence.

1. The government should invest more \_\_\_\_ renewable energy.
  - a) on
  - b) at
  - c) in
  - d) for
2. Many young people are interested \_\_\_\_ pursuing careers abroad.
  - a) for
  - b) to
  - c) in
  - d) with
3. Success in life often depends \_\_\_\_ perseverance and opportunity.
  - a) of
  - b) on



- c) from
- d) by
- 4. The report focused \_\_\_\_ the economic impacts of tourism.
  - a) in
  - b) on
  - c) at
  - d) for
- 5. Parents are responsible \_\_\_\_ their children's early education.
  - a) of
  - b) for
  - c) to
  - d) with
- 6. We need to discuss \_\_\_\_ the environmental policy in detail.
  - a) about
  - b) (no preposition)
  - c) on
  - d) for
- 7. Social media has resulted \_\_\_\_ a major shift in communication.
  - a) to
  - b) in
  - c) for
  - d) by
- 8. Students must learn to concentrate \_\_\_\_ their studies.
  - a) at
  - b) to
  - c) on
  - d) in

### **Section B: Noun + Preposition**

Choose the correct preposition to complete the sentence.

- 9. One significant advantage \_\_\_\_ remote work is better work-life balance.
  - a) for
  - b) about
  - c) of
  - d) in
- 10. There has been a sharp increase \_\_\_\_ the cost of living.
  - a) of
  - b) on
  - c) at
  - d) in

11. Education is widely seen as the key \_\_\_\_ social mobility.  
a) for  
b) of  
c) to  
d) in
12. The internet has a profound impact \_\_\_\_ modern society.  
a) in  
b) on  
c) to  
d) for
13. He has considerable experience \_\_\_\_ international business.  
a) of  
b) in  
c) about  
d) for
14. We need to find a long-term solution \_\_\_\_ plastic pollution.  
a) of  
b) for  
c) to  
d) on
15. There is a clear difference \_\_\_\_ theory and practice.  
a) from  
b) among  
c) between  
d) of

### Section C: Adjective + Preposition

Choose the correct preposition to complete the sentence.

16. Many graduates are worried \_\_\_\_ finding a good job.  
a) for  
b) about  
c) with  
d) on
17. She is very good \_\_\_\_ learning new languages.  
a) in  
b) at  
c) with  
d) for
18. This new trend is similar \_\_\_\_ one we saw a decade ago.  
a) with

- b) as
  - c) to
  - d) like
19. The country is rich \_\_\_\_ natural resources.
- a) with
  - b) of
  - c) in
  - d) for
20. Citizens should be aware \_\_\_\_ their legal rights.
- a) about
  - b) for
  - c) of
  - d) with
21. He was very proud \_\_\_\_ his daughter's achievement.
- a) for
  - b) with
  - c) of
  - d) about
22. Are you satisfied \_\_\_\_ the quality of public transport?
- a) from
  - b) by
  - c) with
  - d) for

**Section D: General Prepositions (Time, Place, Phrases)**

Choose the correct preposition to complete the sentence.

23. \_\_\_\_ my opinion, stricter laws are necessary.
- a) To
  - b) For
  - c) In
  - d) According
24. Global temperatures have risen significantly \_\_\_\_ the 20th century.
- a) on
  - b) at
  - c) in
  - d) by
25. The conference will be held \_\_\_\_ Friday, \_\_\_\_ 10 a.m.
- a) at, at
  - b) on, at

- c) in, on  
d) on, in
26. You can find a lot of useful information \_\_\_\_ the internet.  
a) in  
b) at  
c) on  
d) by
27. \_\_\_\_ the one hand, technology saves time; \_\_\_\_ the other, it can be distracting.  
a) In, in  
b) On, on  
c) At, at  
d) By, by
28. Most people commute to work \_\_\_\_ bus or \_\_\_\_ car.  
a) with, with  
b) by, by  
c) on, in  
d) by, in
29. \_\_\_\_ contrast to rural areas, cities offer more job opportunities.  
a) On  
b) In  
c) By  
d) With
30. The research is based \_\_\_\_ data collected from surveys.  
a) in  
b) of  
c) on  
d) at

### Section E: Advanced / Tricky Combinations

Choose the correct preposition to complete the sentence.

31. The government must provide citizens \_\_\_\_ accurate information.  
a) (no preposition)  
b) for  
c) with  
d) to
32. She apologized \_\_\_\_ her colleague \_\_\_\_ the misunderstanding.  
a) at, for  
b) to, for  
c) with, about  
d) to, about

33. The company is capable \_\_\_\_ handling large projects.  
a) to  
b) for  
c) of  
d) with
34. This policy is consistent \_\_\_\_ our long-term goals.  
a) to  
b) with  
c) for  
d) on
35. Public opinion is often influenced \_\_\_\_ media coverage.  
a) by  
b) from  
c) with  
d) on
36. He applied \_\_\_\_ a manager position \_\_\_\_ a multinational company.  
a) for, at  
b) to, in  
c) for, in  
d) to, at
37. The essay compares urban life \_\_\_\_ life in the countryside.  
a) with  
b) to  
c) from  
d) and
38. Lack \_\_\_\_ exercise can contribute \_\_\_\_ health problems.  
a) of, to  
b) in, for  
c) of, in  
d) for, to
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## Answer Key

### Section A: Verb + Preposition

1. c) in (invest in)
2. c) in (interested in)

3. b) on (depends on)
4. b) on (focused on)
5. b) for (responsible for)
6. b) (no preposition) (discuss something)
7. b) in (resulted in)
8. c) on (concentrate on)

### **Section B: Noun + Preposition**

9. c) of (advantage of)
10. d) in (increase in)
11. c) to (key to)
12. b) on (impact on)
13. b) in (experience in)
14. c) to (solution to)
15. c) between (difference between)

### **Section C: Adjective + Preposition**

16. b) about (worried about)
17. b) at (good at)
18. c) to (similar to)
19. c) in (rich in)
20. c) of (aware of)
21. c) of (proud of)
22. c) with (satisfied with)

### **Section D: General Prepositions**

23. c) In (In my opinion)
24. c) in (in the 20th century)
25. b) on, at (on Friday, at 10 a.m.)
26. c) on (on the internet)
27. b) On, on (On the one hand... on the other hand)
28. b) by, by (by bus, by car - general mode)
29. b) In (In contrast to)
30. c) on (based on)

### **Section E: Advanced / Tricky**

31. c) with (provide someone with something)
32. b) to, for (apologize to someone for something)
33. c) of (capable of)
34. b) with (consistent with)
35. a) by (influenced by)

36. a) for, at (apply for a job at a company)

37. a) with (compare A with B)

38. a) of, to (lack of, contribute to)