Lesson 4: Prepositions, Adjectives and Adverbs

Introduction

Why Are Prepositions, Adjectives and Adverbs Important?

Speech-language pathology requires precise descriptions of:

- where something occurs;
- when something occurs;
- how a person performs a task;
- how frequently a behavior occurs;
- the characteristics of speech and language;
- the severity or nature of a difficulty.

For example:

The child produced the sound **incorrectly**.

The adverb **incorrectly** tells us how the child produced the sound.

Compare:

The child produced **an incorrect sound**.

Here, **incorrect** is an adjective describing the noun **sound**.

Another example:

The child participated **in** the assessment.

The word **in** is a preposition.

Therefore, these three word classes have different functions:

Word class	Main function	Example
Preposition	Shows a relationship	in the clinic
Adjective	Describes a noun	a difficult task

Prepositions

What Is a Preposition?

A **preposition** is a word that shows a relationship between a noun/pronoun and another part of a sentence.

Common prepositions include:

in, on, at, to, from, with, for, about, before, after, during, between, under, over, near, beside, behind, into, through

Prepositions can express:

- place;
- time;
- direction;
- relationships.

Prepositions of Place

In

Use **in** when something is inside an area, space, or container.

Examples:

The child is **in** the clinic.

The therapist works **in** a hospital.

On

Use **on** when something is positioned on a surface.

Examples:

The picture is **on** the table.

The assessment form is **on** the desk.

At

Use **at** to refer to a particular point or location.

Examples:

The child is **at** the clinic.

The therapist is **at** work.

The appointment is **at** the speech therapy center.

Compare

The therapist works **in** a hospital.

This emphasizes the institution/building as an environment.

The therapist is **at** the hospital.

This emphasizes the location or point.

Prepositions of Time

At

Use **at** with specific times.

at 9:00

at noon

at lunchtime

Example:

The therapy session begins **at** 9:00.

On

Use **on** with days and dates.

on Monday

on Tuesday morning

on 12 October

Example:

The child attends therapy **on** Monday.

In

Use **in** with months, years, seasons, and longer periods.

in September

in 2026

in winter

in the morning

Examples:

The child began therapy **in** 2025.

The assessment was conducted **in** the morning.

Quick Check 1

Choose the correct preposition.

1.The child is ___ the therapy room.

A. at
B. in
C. on
D. to

Correct answer: B — in

2.The therapy session starts ___ 10:00.

A. in
B. on
C. at
D. from

Correct answer: C — at

3.The child attends therapy ___ Monday.

A. at
B. in
C. on
D. from

Correct answer: C — on

4.The child started therapy ___ 2025.

A. at
B. on
C. in
D. to

Correct answer: C — in

Prepositions of Direction and Movement

Prepositions can also describe movement.

To

The child went **to** the clinic.

The therapist moved **to** the next activity.

From

The child came **from** school.

The information was obtained **from** the parents.

Into

Use **into** when something moves from outside to inside.

The child walked **into** the therapy room.

Out of

The child walked **out of** the room.

Through

The therapist guided the child **through** the activity.

Clinical Examples

The child moved **from** one activity **to** another.

The therapist led the child **through** a series of language tasks.

The child entered **into** the room.

Important correction

In the last example, **into** is unnecessary in ordinary clinical English when simply describing entry:

The child entered **the room**.

or:

The child walked **into the room**.

Adjectives

What Is an Adjective?

An **adjective** describes or gives information about a noun.

Adjectives can describe:

- size;
- age;
- quality;
- severity;
- appearance;
- behavior;
- ability;
- characteristics.

General Examples

a **young** child

a **difficult** task

a **clear** explanation

a **long** session

a **complex** sentence

Position of Adjectives

Adjectives commonly occur before nouns.

a **young child**

a **clinical assessment**

a **difficult task**

They can also occur after linking verbs such as **be, seem, appear, become**.

The child's speech is **clear**.

The task was **difficult**.

The response was **appropriate**.

Quick Check 2

Identify the adjective in each sentence.

1.The child has limited vocabulary.

Answer: limited

2.The therapist used visual cues.

Answer: visual

3.The child's speech was clear.

Answer: clear

4.The assessment was difficult.

Answer: difficult

Adverbs

What Is an Adverb?

An **adverb** provides information about:

- how an action happens;
- when it happens;
- where it happens;
- how often it happens;
- to what degree it happens.

Examples:

The child spoke **clearly**.

The therapist responded **quickly**.

The child **often** needs repetition.

The therapist **carefully** recorded the responses.

Adverbs of Manner

Adverbs of manner describe **how** an action occurs.

Common examples:

- clearly
- slowly
- quickly
- carefully

Clinical examples:

The child produced the target sound **correctly**.

The therapist explained the task **clearly**.

The child completed the task **independently**.

The child responded **slowly**.

Adverbs of Frequency

Adverbs of frequency tell us **how often** something occurs.

Examples:

- always
- usually
- often
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

Clinical examples:

The child **usually** follows instructions.

The child **often** requires repetition.

The child **sometimes** omits final consonants.

The child **rarely** initiates conversation.

Adverbs of Degree

Adverbs of degree indicate intensity or extent.

Examples:

- very
- quite
- rather
- extremely
- highly

- slightly

Examples:

The child is **very** responsive.

The difficulty is **quite** noticeable.

The child demonstrated **slightly** reduced intelligibility.

Forming Adverbs

Many adverbs are formed by adding **-ly** to an adjective.

Adjective	Adverb
clear	clearly
careful	carefully
slow	slowly
quick	quickly
accurate	accurately
appropriate	appropriately

Example

Adjective:

The child gave a **clear** response.

Adverb:

The child responded **clearly**.

Important Exceptions

Not all adverbs are formed with **-ly**.

Examples:

- fast → fast
- hard → hard
- late → late
- early → early

For example:

The child worked **hard**.

Not:

✕The child worked hardly.

Hardly has a different meaning and does not simply mean “in a hard manner.”

Quick Check 3

Choose the correct word.

1.The child spoke ___.

A. clear
B. clearly

Answer: B — clearly

2.The therapist gave a ___ explanation.

A. clear
B. clearly

Answer: A — clear

3.The child completed the task ___.

A. independent
B. independently

Answer: B — independently

4.The therapist provided a ___ instruction.

A. carefully
B. careful

Answer: B — careful

Adjective + Preposition Combinations

Some adjectives commonly occur with particular prepositions.

These combinations should be learned as grammatical patterns.

Examples:

- interested **in**
- good **at**
- different **from**
- similar **to**

- responsible **for**
- aware **of**
- familiar **with**
- dependent **on**

Clinical Examples

The child is **interested in** the activity.

The child is **good at** visual matching.

The child's performance is **different from** the previous assessment.

The current results are **similar to** the previous results.

The therapist is **responsible for** conducting the assessment.

The parents are **aware of** the child's communication difficulties.

The therapist is **familiar with** the assessment procedure.

Quick Check 4

Choose the correct preposition.

1.The therapist is familiar ___ the assessment procedure.

A. at
B. in
C. with
D. from

Answer: C

2.The parents are aware ___ the child's difficulties.

A. of
B. to
C. at
D. with

Answer: A

3.The current results are similar ___ the previous results.

A. from
B. to
C. at
D. on

Answer: B

4.The child is interested ___ the activity.

A. on
B. at
C. in
D. from

Answer: C

Verb + Preposition Combinations

Some verbs are commonly followed by particular prepositions.

Examples:

- listen **to**
- talk **to**
- speak **to**
- depend **on**
- participate **in**
- respond **to**
- focus **on**
- refer **to**
- communicate **with**

Clinical Examples

The child listened **to** the therapist.

The therapist spoke **to** the parents.

The child participated **in** the activity.

The therapist focused **on** expressive language.

The child responded **to** the question.

The therapist referred **to** the previous assessment.

The child communicated **with** the therapist.