

ENGLISH GRAMMAR : PREPOSITIONS OF TIME

- We use ordinal numbers to express dates in English

(first, second, third, etc.):

Today is April 1st (but this is how we say it: *Today is April the first*)

- We use different prepositions in expressions of time: see the table below.

On Saturday; in 1993; at midday; after three o'clock; before Saturday...

- Months and days always begin with a capital letter.

June; Friday ...

- Dates are written in one way and pronounced in another. Pay attention to the following examples:

Writing Dates: June 30th, 1997 *or* 30 June, 1997
March 2nd, 2007 *or* 2 March, 2007

Saying Dates: June *the* thirtieth, nineteen ninety-seven
or *the* thirtieth of June, nineteen ninety-seven

March *the* second, two thousand and seven
or *the* second *of* March, two thousand and seven

Other ways of writing dates:

18/04/1999 (UK format: day/month/year)

04/18/1999 (USA format; month/day/year)

PREPOSITIONS OF TIME: AT, IN, ON

We use:

- **at** for a PRECISE TIME
- **in** for MONTHS, YEARS, CENTURIES and LONG PERIODS
- **on** for DAYS and DATES

at	in	on
PRECISE TIME	MONTHS, YEARS, CENTURIES and LONG PERIODS	DAYS and DATES
at 3 o'clock	in May	on Sunday
at 10.30am	in summer	on Tuesdays
at noon	in the summer	on 6 March
at dinnertime	in 1990	on 25 Dec. 2010
at bedtime	in the 1990's	on Christmas Day
at sunrise	in the next century	on Independence Day
at sunset	in the Ice Age	on my birthday
at the moment	in the past/future	on New Year's Eve

Look at these examples:

- I have a meeting **at** 9am.
- The shop closes **at** midnight.
- Jane went home **at** lunchtime.
- In England, it often snows **in** December.
- Do you think we will go to Jupiter **in** the future?
- There should be a lot of progress **in** the next century.
- Do you work **on** Mondays?
- Her birthday is **on** 20 November.
- Where will you be **on** New Year's Day?

Notice the use of the preposition of time **at** in the following standard expressions:

Expression	Example
at night	The stars shine at night .
at the weekend	I don't usually work at the weekend .
at Christmas/Easter	I stay with my family at Christmas .
at the same time	We finished the test at the same time .
at present	He's not home at present . Try later.

Notice the use of the prepositions of time **in** and **on** in these common expressions:

in	on
in the morning	on Tuesday morning
in the mornings	on Saturday mornings
in the afternoon(s)	on Sunday afternoons
in the evening(s)	on Monday evening

When we say **last, next, every, this** we do not also use **at, in, on**.

- I went to London **last** June. (**not in last** June)
- He's coming back **next** Tuesday. (**not on next** Tuesday)
- I go home **every** Easter. (**not at every** Easter)
- We'll call you **this** evening. (**not in this** evening)