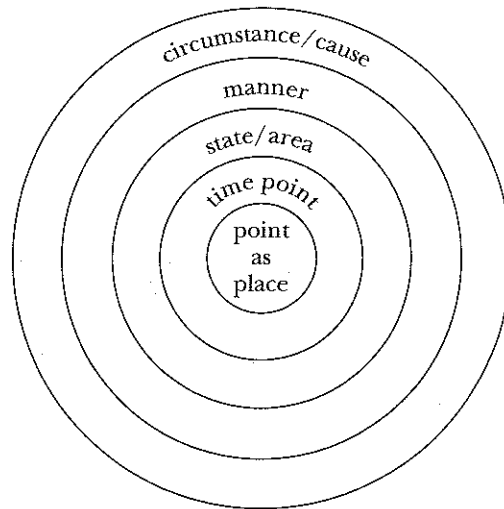


While this schema occupies a central position, one can imagine radiating from this central schema a system of links that are sometimes defined by shared properties with the central schema but that are often connected metaphorically to account for uses of *over*, such as

She has a strange power over me.

Given the notion of a central schema or a more prototypical meaning for prepositions, it would perhaps make sense to portray the meaning of prepositions as a series of concentric circles—with the spatial sense being most central. If we were to rearrange Dirven's observations about *at*, they might look something like this:



In the interest of space, however, let us instead display in chart form the various meanings of common prepositions.¹⁰

Prep.	Space	Time	Degree	Other (includes idiomatic usages)
at	<i>point/intersect</i> : meet at the corner <i>target</i> : Look at John./ Throw the stone at the wall. <i>general area</i> : Meet me at the theater.	We met at 1:00. It rains at night there.	Water freezes at 0°C.	He works at keeping in shape. She's good at dancing.
about	<i>all around</i> : He ran about the yard.	<i>approx</i> : about 1:00	<i>approx</i> : about \$1 about 70 degrees	<i>concerning</i> : a book about mathematics
above	<i>higher than</i> : above the picture (on the wall)		above \$5 above freezing above average	above suspicion above reproach
against	<i>contact</i> : to lean against the wall	<i>conflict</i> : to work against the clock	<i>conflict</i> : two against four	<i>internal</i> : against one's will <i>external</i> : against all odds
around	<i>state</i> : The fence is around the house. <i>action</i> : The children run around the yard.	<i>approx</i> : around 1:00	<i>approx</i> : around \$2 around 4 miles	

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<i>Prep.</i>	<i>Space</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>Other (includes idiomatic usages)</i>
before	<i>in front of</i> : before the mast He stood before us.	<i>earlier than</i> : before 1960 before the accident		
below	<i>lower than</i> : below the surface		below zero below average	
between	<i>at an intermediate point in relation to two entities</i> : between the house and the street	between 1 and 2 o'clock	between 100 and 110 lbs.	between you and me
by	<i>nearness</i> : chair by the desk	<i>no later than</i> : by 5 P.M.	<i>reduplication - (gradual increase)</i> : little by little; inch by inch <i>degree of failure</i> : miss the target by a mile; miss the train by 3 minutes	<i>without help</i> : do by oneself
for	<i>goal</i> : set out for Alaska <i>distance</i> : for 7 miles	<i>duration</i> : for 7 years	<i>exchange</i> : buy for \$4	<i>reason</i> : California is famous for its wines. <i>goal/purpose</i> : fish for trout
from	<i>a starting point</i> : We traveled from N.Y. to L.A. <i>origin</i> : man from New York	work from 9 to 5	from 60 to 80 degrees from 5 to 7 dollars	<i>source</i> : paper is made from wood <i>cause</i> : wet from the rain
in	<i>enclosure</i> : The man is in the room.	<i>in a period</i> : WW II ended in 1945. <i>future appl.</i> : Come in 10 minutes		<i>currency</i> : Pay me in dollars. <i>language</i> : Write/say it in English.
of	<i>names of geog. loc. or institutions</i> : the city of N.Y. the state of Texas the Univ. of Calif.	<i>before</i> : a quarter of ten	<i>fraction, portion</i> : one of the boys	<i>posses./assoc.</i> : a friend of mine <i>source</i> : a table made of wood
on	<i>contact</i> : on the wall <i>along</i> : on the Po; I live on this street.	<i>day, date</i> : on Sunday on Nov. 9th		<i>communication</i> : on the radio; on TV/the telly <i>concerning</i> : a book on magic; a lecture on modern art
over	<i>state of being above (with or without contact)</i> : carry a sweater over his shoulder; the roof over our heads <i>action above</i> : jump over the fence	<i>spanning time</i> : over the weekend	<i>more than</i> : over an hour over \$2 over 0°C	<i>communication</i> : over the radio, TV
through	<i>penetrate</i> : through the window; through the forest	<i>duration</i> : through the years		<i>endurance</i> : through thick and thin

Prep.	Space	Time	Degree	Other (includes idiomatic usages)
to	<i>direction:</i> go to the movies	<i>until:</i> work from 9 to 5 <i>before:</i> a quarter to eleven	He is wise to that extent./He is wise to such an extent that	<i>accompany:</i> dance to the music
toward(s)	<i>in the direction of:</i> walk toward the wall	toward morning	the temperature moved steadily toward 0°C	toward a lasting peace
under	<i>below (state):</i> be under the house <i>below (action):</i> crawl under the house	<i>less than:</i> in under an hour	under \$1 under 10 men under 70 degrees	<i>condition:</i> under duress (stress)
with	<i>alongside, near:</i> even with the wall	<i>together:</i> He grew wiser with the years. He rises with the chickens.	<i>equal standing or ability:</i> rank with the best; run with the fastest	<i>in regard to:</i> pleased with the gift <i>manner:</i> spoke with ease

The chart above is only a partial systematization of prepositions. An unabridged dictionary will provide you with other definitions for each preposition listed.

THE MEANINGS OF NONSPATIAL PREPOSITIONS

Two of the most common prepositions, *of* and *for*, don't have as obvious a spatial sense as do the other frequently used ones.¹¹ We know of no study that has focused on the meaning(s) of *for* in authentic texts; however, *of* has been investigated by Thompson (1992). In reviewing the history of *of*, Thompson found that *of* does, in fact, have a spatial connection. Thompson states that until a few centuries ago, *of* and *off* represented different pronunciations of the same word. Dirven (1993) also mentions the common origin of *off* and *of*, with *off* reduced to *of* in its area or causal meaning:

Place: *He has stepped off the platform.*

Area: *Talk of the devil (and he is sure to appear).*

Cause: *He died of cholera.*

We have also seen that *of* co-occurs with *out* in a spatial sense to mean departure from an enclosure, which can be extended metaphorically to an emotional state:

Place: *He walked out of the house.*

Cause: *He killed himself out of despair.*

However, in other instances of the use of *of*, it is more difficult to discern any spatial meaning. Thompson (1992) analyzed 200 tokens of *of*—100 from written texts and 100 from oral texts—in light of the three definitions she had distilled from her search of relevant literature:

1. concerning; about

a story of a princess
They told of her heroism.

2. derived or coming from (X of Y)

the President of the United States
the headlights of the car