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prep·o·si·tion¹  (prĕp'ə-zīsh ən)

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n. **Abbr.** **prep.**

A word or phrase placed typically before a substantive and indicating the relation of that substantive to a verb, an adjective, or another substantive, as English *at*, *by*, *with*, *from*, and *in regard to*.

[Middle English *preposicioun*, from Old French *preposicion*, from Latin *praepositiō*, *praepositiōn-*, a putting before, preposition (translation of Greek *prothesis*), from *praepositus*, past participle of *praepōnere*, to put in front : *prae-*, *pre-* + *pōnere*, to put; see **apo-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Usage Note: It was John Dryden who first promulgated the doctrine that a preposition may not be used at the end of a sentence, probably on the basis of a specious analogy to Latin. Grammarians in the 1700s refined the doctrine, and the rule became a venerated maxim of schoolroom grammar. There has been some retreat from this position in recent years, however—what amounts to a recognition of the frequency with which prepositions end sentences in English. In fact, English syntax not only allows but sometimes even requires final placement of the preposition, as in *We have much to be thankful for* and *That depends on what you believe in*. Efforts to rewrite such sentences to place the preposition elsewhere can have stilted and even comical results, as is demonstrated in the saying (often attributed, probably falsely, to Winston Churchill) "*This is the kind of pedantic nonsense up with which I will not put*." · Even sticklers for the traditional rule can have no grounds for criticizing sentences such as *I don't know where she will end up* and *It's the most curious book I've ever run across*. In these examples, *up* and *across* are adverbs (or more properly, what linguists call particles), not prepositions. One sure sign that this is so is that these examples cannot be transformed into sentences with prepositional phrases. It is simply not grammatical English to say *I don't know up where she will end* and *It's the most curious book across which I have ever run*.

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pre·po·si·tion² also **pre·po·si·tion**  (prĕ'pə-zīsh ən)

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tr.v. **pre·po·si·tioned**, **pre·po·si·tion·ing**, **pre·po·si·tions** also **pre·po·si·tioned** or **pre·po·si·tion·ing** or **pre·po·si·tions**
To position or place in position in advance: *artillery that was prepositioned at strategic points in the desert*.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

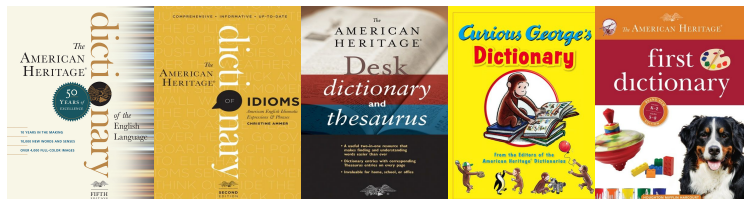
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

[Semitic Roots](#)

The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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