

LESSON 42

Prepositions

42.1. Adverbs

In the earliest surviving Greek literature, many words, which are regularly used as prepositions in the classical period, are still being used as adverbs.

ἐπεὶ **πρό** οἱ εἶπομεν ἡμεῖς ... (Hom.*Od.* 1.37.)
*For we told him **beforehand** ...*

42.2. Compound Verbs

When placed immediately before verbs, these adverbs form compound verbs.

αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν **ἀφείλετο** νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ. (Hom.*Od.* 1.9.)
*And he **took away** the day of return for them.*

ἀφείλετο = ἀφ' εἴλετο.

42.3. Prepositions

When placed immediately before, in the middle of, or after a noun phrase, these adverbs begin to look like prepositions governing a Case.

... πλάζει δ' **ἀπὸ πατρίδος αἴης**. (Hom.*Od.* 1.75.)
*... but he turns <him> **away from his native land**.*

ἀλλά μοι ἀμφ' Ὀδυσῆϊ δαΐφρονι δαίεται ἦτορ,
δυσμόρω, ὅς δὴ δηθὰ **φίλων ἄπο** πήματα πάσχει
νήσῳ ἐν ἀμφιρύτῃ ... (Hom.*Od.* 1.48–50.)

*But for me my heart is torn concerning wise Odysseus,
ill-fated man, who indeed has long been suffering miseries **away from his
dear ones**
on an island surrounded by sea ...*

42.4. Case Functions

The functions of the Accusative, Genitive and Dative Cases were established before prepositions began to be used with them. In the Lessons and Exercises concerned with those Cases, all the functions of the Cases were expressed without the use of prepositions. In classical Greek, it is often possible to detect the original Case function of a prepositional phrase apart from the preposition itself.

εἴθ' ὤφελ' Ἄργους μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος
Κόλχων **ἐς αἶαν** κυανέας Συμπληγάδας, ... (E.*Med.* 1–2.)

*If only the ship Argo had not flown through
the dark Clashing Rocks **to the land** of the Colchians, ...*

In the context, αἶαν is clearly an Accusative of Goal, even apart from the use of the preposition ἐς.

However, the original Case function is not always so clear. For example, there are several passages in the tragedy of Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, where the phrase πρὸς θεῶν is used in an urgent entreaty with second person Imperative or Subjunctive.

πρὸς θεῶν δίδασκέ με. (S.*OT* 1009.)
By the gods, instruct me.

A possible rationale for the prepositional phrase is that it is an elliptical request formula. The request is explicit in the following couplet from Theognis.

χρῆ τολμᾶν χαλεποῖσιν ἐν ἄλγεσι κείμενον ἄνδρα,
πρὸς τε θεῶν αἰτεῖν ἔκλυσιν **ἀθανάτων**. (Thgn. 555–556.)

*A man when involved in difficult sufferings should endure,
and ask from the immortal gods release.*

Here any response to the request (αἰτεῖν) must start at (πρὸς) the gods, but must proceed from the gods (θεῶν). The Genitive of Separation would be the appropriate category. Compare δεῖσθαι, προσδεῖσθαι, λίσσεσθαι and χρεῖσθαι, 'to beg, to entreat, to request (from)', with Genitive of person but no preposition.

The Accusative of Goal without a preposition is limited to phrases denoting Place. However, the Accusative of Goal with a preposition may also express Time.

καὶ τελευτῶντος τοῦ χειμῶνος **πρὸς ἄρ** ἤδη κλίμακας ἔχοντες οἱ Ἀργεῖοι ἦλθον ἐπὶ τὴν Ἐπίδαυρον, ... (Th. 5.56.5.)

*And as the winter was ending, now **towards spring**, the Argives came with scaling-ladders against Epidaurus, ...*

42.5. Possessive Genitive with Preposition

In an abbreviated construction, a Possessive Genitive may be used with certain prepositions, especially ἐν and εἰς (ἐς) and sometimes ἐκ (ἐξ).

τοῦθ' ὑμῖν Αἴας τοῦπος ὕστατον θροεῖ.
τὰ δ' ἄλλ' **ἐν** Ἄιδου τοῖς κάτω μυθήσομαι. (S.Aj. 864–865.)

*Ajax addresses this last word to you,
and for the rest I shall speak **in <the realm> of Hades** to those below.*

... **εἰς ἐνὸς** τῶν διακόνων ἐξέπεμψεν αὐτούς. (X.HG 5.4.6.)
... *he sent them off **to <the house> of one** of the servants.*

ἐκ δ' ἄρα Πεισάνδροιο Πολυκτορίδαο ἄνακτος
ἴσθμιον ἦνεικεν θεράπων, περικαλλὲς ἄγαλμα.
(Hom.Od. 18.299–300.)

*And then **out of <the house> of lord Pisander** son of Polyktor
his assistant brought a necklace, a very beautiful adornment.*

42.6. Compound Verb with Preposition

In classical prose, an adverbial prefix of a verb is often repeated as a preposition with the appropriate Case. However, this usage also occurs in verse. (But in the classical period poets more often than prose writers rely on the established Case functions without a preposition.) The repetition is normally ignored in English translation.

... ἐλέχθη ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὡς οἱ Πελοποννήσιοι φάρμακα **ἐσβεβλήκοιεν**
ἐς τὰ φρέατα· (Th. 2.48.2.)

... *it was said by them that the Peloponnesians **had thrown poison into** their cisterns.*

Repetition in prose.

... μηδέ ποτ' εἶπηθ'
ὡς Ζεὺς ὑμᾶς **εἰς** ἀπρόοπτον
πήμ' **εἰσέβαλεν** ... (A.Pr. 1073–1075.)

... *and do not ever say*
*that Zeus **threw you into***
unforeseen misery ...

Repetition in verse.

... τὸν ἐσρέοντα διὰ Συμπληγάδων
βοῦς ὑλοφορβοῦς **πόντον εἰσεβάλλομεν**, ... (E.IT 260–261.)

... *we **had been driving** our cattle that feed in woodland*
***into the sea** that flows in through the Clashing Rocks, ...*

No repetition in verse.

42.7. Metaphorical Use of Prepositions

The examples in §42.3 and the first example in §42.4 above use prepositions with the appropriate Cases in a literal sense: ἀπό with Genitive of Separation, ἐν with Dative of Place, ἐς with Accusative of Goal. In the example from Theognis (§42.4), πρὸς is used with a Genitive of Separation in a metaphorical sense—no literal, physical movement is involved. This metaphorical usage is quite common, especially when a preposition is used with an abstract noun.

ἐτράποντο **πρὸς ληστείαν** (Th. 1.5.1.)
*they turned **to piracy***

ὑπέστρεφον **ἐπὶ ζήτησιν** τῶν Περσέων (Hdt. 4.140.1.)
*they turned back **to search for** the Persians*

ἐκ τούτου ἐπειράτο Μιθραδάτης διδάσκειν (X.An. 3.3.4.)
after this Mithradates tried to explain

παρεσκέυασαν τοὺς **ἐν τέλει** (Th. 3.36.5.)
they prevailed upon those in authority

ἐγὼ ταῦτα τοῦτον ἐποίησα **σὺν δίκη** (Hdt. 1.115.2.)
I did this to this <man> with justice

42.8. Accent and Position of Prepositions

Two-syllable prepositions with oxytone accent (except ἀμφί, ἀντί, διά) become paroxytone when they follow their Case. Note φίλων ἄπο in §42.3 above (second example). In classical prose, περί is the only ‘proper’ preposition (§42.11 below) which is placed after its Case. ἔνεκα is regularly placed after its Case, and ἄνευ sometimes.

42.9. Adverbial Accusative as Preposition

Some nouns are used adverbially in the Accusative and are qualified by a simple Possessive Genitive. These Accusative nouns virtually have the function of prepositions.

τρόπον αἰγυπιῶν (A.Ag. 49.)
in the manner of vultures

δίκην τοξότου (Pl.Leg. 705 E.)
in the manner of a bowman

τόλμας **χάριν** (S.Ant. 371.),
because of his rashness

τρέφ' ἀξίως νιν **σοῦ** τε τήν τ' **ἐμήν χάριν**. (E.Ph. 762.)
Look after her properly for the sake of yourself and for my sake.

In this and other instances there is a mixture of Genitive Case and Possessive adjective with χάριν.

42.10. Pregnant Construction

In a so-called pregnant construction, verbs of rest are sometimes used with εἰς (εἶς) + Accusative when they imply previous motion.

... ἐκ τῆς Μέμφιδος ἐξήλασε τοὺς Ἕλληνας καὶ τέλος εἰς
Προσωπίτιδα τὴν νῆσον κατέκλησεν· (Th. 1.109.4.)

... *he drove the Greeks out of Memphis and finally shut <them> up in the island of Prosopitis.*

Conversely, verbs of motion are sometimes used with ἐν + Dative when they imply subsequent rest.

καίτοι πόθεν κλέος γ' ἂν εὐκλεέστερον
κατέσχον ἢ τὸν αὐτάδελφον ἐν τάφῳ
τιθεῖσα; (S.Ant. 502–504.)

*And yet from where would I have obtained more glorious
glory than by putting my own brother into
a grave?*

42.11. 'Proper' and 'Improper' Prepositions

The label 'proper' has been applied to prepositions that are used to form compound verbs, and the label 'improper' to prepositions that are not so used. The classification is not very useful. It applies the term 'proper' to the very words which are used in two different ways, either as prepositions or as adverbial prefixes to verbs. It applies the term 'improper' to the very words which are used only as prepositions. It does not apply the term 'improper' to the adverbial Accusative nouns which have the function of prepositions. Nor does it take account of other prepositions which may also originally have been Case forms, such as ἐντός (Ablative) or περί (Locative). See Smyth (1956), §§1647, 1699 and (for a list) 1700–1702.

42.12. Hellenistic and Later Developments

Prepositions are more often used (with the appropriate Cases) than in the classical period.

But the distinction between εἰς + Accusative and ἐν + Dative becomes further blurred.

Fewer prepositions are being used. And their range of meaning is being restricted. By way of compensation, εἰς, ἐν and ἐκ are used more extensively.

The Dative Case is less often used with prepositions. ἀνά, μετά, περί and ὑπό are no longer used with the Dative at all (except ὑπό rarely in Polybius).

There is an increasing tendency for each preposition to be used with one Case only.

The Accusative becomes more generally used as the preferred Case with prepositions. In modern Greek, it is the only Case used with prepositions. And only seven prepositions remain in modern Greek.

References

Leaf & Bayfield (Eds) (1895), *The Iliad of Homer* (Vol. 1), §§33–35.

Smyth (1956), *Greek grammar*, §§1302, 1636–1702.

EXERCISE 42A

1. Translate the following passages.
2. For each prepositional phrase in **bold** type, name the grammatical Case and indicate the particular Case function (apart from the preposition). For the Case functions, see Lessons 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41, and for prepositional expressions of Purpose see Lesson 27.1. Passages for Exercise 42A are selected from Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon.

Example

οἱ δ' **ἐν τῇ πόλει** ὄντες Ἐπιδάμνιοι ἐπειδὴ ἐπιέζοντο, πέμπουσιν **ἔς τὴν Κέρκυραν** πρέσβεις ... (Th. 1.24.6.)

*And the Epidamnians who were **in the city**, since they were being hard pressed, sent [Hist. Pres.] ambassadors **to Corcyra** ...*

ἐν τῇ πόλει: Dative, Locative, Place.

ἔς τὴν Κέρκυραν: Accusative, Adverbial, Goal.

1. εἰ οὖν οὗτοι μὴ δώσουσι τὴν ἐσχάτην δίκην, τίς ποτε **πρὸς τὴν πόλιν** θαρρῶν πορεύσεται;
2. τὴν δὲ γῆν δημοσιώσαντες ἀπεμίσθωσαν **ἐπὶ δέκα ἔτη** ...

δημοσιοῦν	<i>to confiscate</i>
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3. καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἀπέθανεν, **ἐπὶ πλέον** ἔτι ἐγνώσθη ἢ πρόνοια αὐτοῦ ἢ **ἔς τὸν πόλεμον**.
4. ὥς δὲ ὁ κῆρύξ τε ἀπήγγειλεν οὐδὲν εἰρηνεῖον **παρὰ τῶν Κορινθίων** καὶ αἱ νῆες αὐτοῖς ἐπεπλήρωτο ... ἐναυμάχησαν.
5. ἔτυχε γὰρ ταύτη τοῖς Μενδαίοις καὶ ἐπικούροις **ἐντὸς τοῦ τείχους** τὰ ὄπλα κείμενα.

ταύτη	<i>here (Dat. as adv.)</i>
Μενδαῖοι, -ων, οἱ	<i>Mendaeans, people of Mende</i>
ἐπίκουρος, -α, -ον	<i>auxiliary (esp. of soldiers)</i>

6. ἀφικόμεθα μὲν **ἐπὶ** τῆς πρότερον οὔσης ξυμμαχίας **ἀνανεώσει** ...
7. βουλόμενοι **ἐν τάχει** τὴν ναυμαχίαν ποιῆσαι ... ξυνεκάλεσαν τοὺς στρατιώτας ...
8. τυραννίδες **ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι** καθίσταντο τῶν προσόδων μεζόνων γιγνομένων ...

πρόσοδος, -ου, ἡ	<i>revenue</i>
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9. Ξύμμαχοί τε γὰρ οὐδενός πω **ἐν τῷ** πρὸ τοῦ **χρόνῳ** ἐκούσιοι γενόμενοι, νῦν ἄλλων τοῦτο δεησόμενοι ἤκομεν ...

τε	anticipates a following καί and need not be translated.
τοῦ	<i>this</i>

EXERCISE 42B

1. Translate the following passages.
2. For each prepositional phrase in **bold** type, name the grammatical Case and indicate the particular Case function (apart from the preposition). For the Case functions, see Lessons 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41. For prepositional expressions of Purpose see Lesson 27.1. Passages for Exercise 42B are selected from Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon.

Example

οἱ δ' **ἐν τῇ πόλει** ὄντες Ἐπιδάμνιοι ἐπειδὴ ἐπιέζοντο, πέμπουσιν **ἐς τὴν Κέρκυραν** πρέσβεις ... (Th. 1.24.6.)

*And the Epidamnians who were **in the city**, since they were being hard pressed, sent [Hist. Pres.] ambassadors **to Corcyra** ...*

ἐν τῇ πόλει: Dative, Locative, Place.

ἐς τὴν Κέρκυραν: Accusative, Adverbial, Goal.

1. ταῦτα ὧν ὑμῖν ἀναβάλλομαι κυρώσειν **ἐς τέταρτον μῆνα ἀπὸ τοῦδε**.

ὧν (Ionic)	οὔν (Attic)
ἀναβάλλεσθαι (Mid.)	<i>to delay</i> (+ Intentive Infin.)
κυροῦν	<i>to confirm</i>

2. καὶ οἱ μὲν αὐτῶν ἐνταῦθα ᾤκησαν, οἱ δὲ ἐσπάρησαν **κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην Ἑλλάδα**.

3. ἔστι δὲ λίθινος ἕτερος τοσοῦτος καὶ ἐν Σαίι, κείμενος **κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον** τῷ ἐν Μέμφι.

λίθινος, (-α, -ον)	<i>tone (statue)</i> (masc. adj. as noun)
καί	<i>also</i>
Σαίῖς	(place name)
τῷ < ... λιθίνῳ >	Dat. with αὐτόν

4. βασιλεῖ τῷ μεγάλῳ **ἐς τροφήν** αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τῆς στρατιῆς διαραίρηται πάρεξ τοῦ φόρου γῆ πάσα ὅσης ἄρχει·

δια-αίρειν	<i>to divide up</i> (here Pres. Perf. Pass.)
πάρεξ	<i>apart from</i> (+ Gen.)

5. **ἐντὸς** γὰρ **εἴκοσι ἡμερῶν** ἤγαγε τοὺς ἄνδρας, ὥσπερ ὑπέστη.

ὑφιστάναί	<i>to promise</i> (Mid./Pass. and Intr. Tenses)
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6. **πρὸ** γὰρ **τῶν Τρωικῶν** οὐδὲν φαίνεται πρότερον κοινῇ ἐργασαμένη ἢ Ἑλλάς·

φαίνεσθαι (Mid.)	<i>to be clear/obvious</i> (in doing/being) (+ Partc.); often paraphrased as 'It is clear that I (etc.) do/am ...'
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7. σῖτόν τε ἐσήγαγον καὶ φρουροὺς ἐγκατέλιπον, τῶν τε ἀνθρώπων τοὺς ἀχρειοτάτους **ξὺν γυναιξὶ καὶ παισὶν** ἐξεκόμισαν.

ἀχρεῖος, (-α, -ον)	<i>unfit</i>
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8. οἶδα δὲ τοὺς τοιούτους, καὶ ὅσοι **ἔν** τινος **λαμπρότητι** προέσχον, ἐν μὲν τῷ καθ' αὐτοὺς βίῳ λυπηροὺς ὄντας ...

τινος (neut.)	<i>in any <field>, etc.</i>
λαμπρότης, -ητος, ἡ	<i>distinction</i>
προέχειν	<i>to excel</i>
λυπηρός, -ή, -όν	<i>annoying</i>

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