

Mastering Those Annoying Little Prepositions¹

In, on, & at

I live in Florida. I was born in Antarctica. I work in Orlando. My brother is in space. My cabin is in the mountains.	<i>In: surrounded by something, contained by something.</i>
There is dust on the tv screen. We flew to Hawaii on a jet.	<i>On: touching, supported by, hanging from, connected with, on top of.</i>
I live at 1234 Alafaya Trail. I shop at Walmart. I always eat at Macdonald's. We live at the end of the road.	<i>At: used to indicate a point in space, the location of someone/something.</i>

To

I went to the mall today. The player threw the ball to her teammate.	<i>To: in the direction of and reaching, as far as.</i>
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To is not always a preposition

*To is not a preposition when it is part of the infinitive. The infinitive is: **to** + the simple form of the verb. The simple form of the verb is a verb without **-s**, **-ed**, or **-ing** endings, e.g., walk, study, want. The infinitives of these words are: to walk, to study, to want.*

I tried to climb the tree. The bird began to sing.
I want to eat. We like to go shopping. The children have to sleep at night. Everyone needs to breathe.

Into

We put the groceries into the bag. The snake crawled into the closet.	<i>Into: to the inside of</i>
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¹ Drawn from Gloria Wahlen's *Prepositions Illustrated*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995.