

# Sentence endings

**In formal academic writing, avoid ending sentences in a preposition.**

A preposition is a word that can indicate a relationship between nouns and pronouns (and phrases) within a sentence. For instance in the following sentence,

The journal is **in** the library.

the bolded **in** is the preposition, indicating the relationship between the journal and library.

**Some common prepositions:**

about above against around at before behind  
beneath beside but by for from in into like  
near of off on out through throughout to under with

**In informal or spoken English it is common to end sentences in prepositions.**

That's what friends are **for**.

There was no one to speak **to**.

They could not explain where it came **from**.

He enjoyed talking to the people he worked **with**.

Prepositions at the end of sentences are called 'hanging prepositions', because they are separated from the word to which they refer.

**Hanging prepositions in formal written English**

Hanging prepositions are less common, and less acceptable, in written formal English. The following sentences are some examples of sentence endings which would be considered unacceptable in formal academic writing. The hanging prepositions are bolded.

We currently use them to enrol the trainees **through**.

They began planning because of the new rules they had to comply **with**.

There was no indication of the socio-economic background the students came **from**.

The results will be reported later **on**.

These sentences would be better reworded as follows, to avoid the hanging preposition.

We currently enrol the trainees **through** them.

They began planning because of the new rules **with** which they had to comply.

There was no indication of the socio-economic background **of** the students.

The results will be reported later in this report.

It is a good idea to check your work for hanging prepositions, and avoid them where possible, but remember that a hanging preposition is better than clumsy sentence construction.