

A

Across, over

We can use **across** or **over** to talk about a *position* on the other side of, or *moving* to the other side of a road, bridge, border, river, etc.:

- Antonio lives in the house **across** / **over** *the road* from ours.
- Once she was **across** / **over** *the border*, she knew she would be safe.

We use **over** rather than **across** when we talk about reaching the other side of something that is high, or higher than it is wide. Compare:

- He jumped **over** *the fence* into the garden. *and*
- He jumped **across** *the stream*.

When we are talking about something we think of as a flat surface, or an area such as a country or sea, we prefer **across** rather than **over**:

- He suddenly saw Eva **across** *the room*.
- The programme was broadcast **across** *Canada*.

We prefer **all over** rather than **all across** to mean 'to or in many different parts of an area'. However, we commonly use **across**, or **right across** for emphasis:

- The disease has now spread **all over** the world. (*or ... (right) across* the world.)

B

Along, through

When we talk about following a line of some kind (a road, a river, etc.), we use **along**:

- They walked **along** the footpath until they came to a small bridge.

We use **through** to emphasise that we are talking about movement in a three dimensional space, with things all around, rather than a two dimensional space, a flat surface or area:

- He pushed his way **through** the crowd of people to get to her.

Through often suggests movement from one side or end of the space to the other. Compare:

- She walked **through** the forest to get to her grandmother's house. *and*
- She spent a lot of her free time walking **in** the forest.

C

Above, over; below, under; beneath, underneath

We can use either **above** or **over** when we say that one thing is at a higher level than another:

- Above** / **Over** the door was a sign saying, 'Mind your head'.

However, we prefer **above**, when one thing is not directly over the other. Compare:

- They lived in a village in the mountains **above** the lake. (not directly over) *and*
- The bird hovered just a few metres **above** / **over** the lake. (directly over)

We use **over**, not **above**, when something covers something else and touches it:

- She put a quilt **over** the bed.

and usually when we are talking about horizontal movement at a higher level than something:

- I saw the helicopter fly out **over** the water, near the fishing boat.

Below is the opposite of **above**; **under** is the opposite of **over**. The differences in the uses of **below** and **under** are similar to those between **above** and **over** (see above):

- It's hard to believe that there is a railway line **below** / **under** the building. (at a lower level)
- Her head was **below** the level of the table so nobody noticed her. (not directly under)
- She hid the presents **under** a blanket. (the blanket covers and touches the presents)
- Zara ran **under** the bridge. (horizontal movement at a lower level)

We can use **underneath** as an alternative to **under** as a preposition of place. **Beneath** is sometimes used as a more formal alternative to **under** or **below**.

Exercises

88.1 Complete the sentences with **across** or **over**, whichever is correct or more likely. If both are possible, write **across / over**. (A)

- 1 After I'd finished work I walked the car park to where Mona was waiting.
- 2 They own a house the river in the old town.
- 3 The gate was locked so we had to climb the wall.
- 4 You're not allowed to walk the railway line. You have to use the bridge.
- 5 Julie Wafaei was the first woman to row alone the Atlantic.
- 6 Nuclear waste is transported the country, despite objections from campaigners.
- 7 The traffic was busy on the main road so we walked the pedestrian crossing.
- 8 She leaned out the balcony rail and looked for Omar in the square below.

88.2 Underline the correct or most appropriate option(s) in each sentence. (A & B)

- 1 It took several minutes to walk *across / over / along / through* the corridor to the exit.
- 2 *Across / Over / Along / Through* the table I could see Oliver looking at his watch.
- 3 He fell *across / over / along / through* the floor into the cellar below.
- 4 I could see Lisa *across / over / along / through* the other side of the river.
- 5 He cycles thousands of miles each year all *across / over / along / through* the country.
- 6 Hotels have been built *across / over / along / through* the beach for about 25 kilometres.

88.3 Correct the prepositions (**above, over, below, under**) if necessary, or write ✓. (C)

- 1 He slept with his wallet below his pillow.
- 2 He broke his leg just below his knee.
- 3 The town stood at the top of the hill, and stretching into the distance under it were green fields.
- 4 She threw a coat above her shoulders and stepped out into the cold.
- 5 He lived in a first-floor flat above a greengrocer's in Leyton.
- 6 When the police got to the car they found the driver slumped above the steering wheel.
- 7 He always wore a vest below his shirt, even in summer.
- 8 I could hear the plane flying high over the clouds.

88.4 A number of common idioms include the prepositions in this unit. Match the idioms in italics to their meanings below.

- 1 A: What's wrong?
B: I'm just feeling rather *under the weather*.
- 2 A: You never arrive on time. You'd be late for your own funeral, you would!
B: That's a bit *below the belt*, isn't it?
- 3 She already has 18 books on gardening *under her belt* and she is now working on number 19.
- 4 He had never played well for the club and left *under a cloud*.
- 5 She lost her temper and went completely *over the top*, accusing him of cheating.
- 6 They received a bonus in December *over and above* their monthly salary.

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| <p>a in addition to
 b successfully completed
 c ill
 d cruel or unfair
 e with some people's disapproval
 f extreme behaviour; indicating disapproval</p> |
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