

Prepositions after nouns

A

Many nouns are followed by the same prepositions as their related adjective or verb. Compare:

- Are you **satisfied** *with* the way that the business is being run? *and*
- The shareholders have expressed **satisfaction** *with* the way the business is being run.

A few nouns are followed by different prepositions. Compare:

- They became **fond** *of* each other at school. *and*
- Their **fondness** *for* each other grew and many years later they married.

Also: proud of / pride in, ashamed of / shame about / at

Some nouns take a preposition where their related verb does not. Compare:

- I **respect** Louis enormously. *and*
- I have enormous **respect** *for* Louis.

Also: admiration for, ban on, discussion about / on, improvement in, influence on, interview with, lack of, respect for

Note that many other nouns are commonly followed by *of* phrases which indicate possession, a property, or classify the noun by describing what it relates to. Compare:

- He **described** the conductor as moving his arms like a windmill. *and*
- His **description** *of* the conductor was very funny.

B

Some nouns can be followed by **of + -ing** but not usually **to-infinitive**:

- He's got into the **habit** *of biting* his nails when he's nervous.

Also: cost, effect, fear, likelihood, possibility, probability, problem, prospect, risk, sign

Some nouns can be followed by a **to-infinitive** but not usually **of + -ing**:

- His unhappy childhood explains his **reluctance** *to talk* about his parents.

Also: ability, attempt, concern, decision, desire, determination, failure, inability, permission, proposal, reason, refusal, (un)willingness

Note that many of these nouns can also be used with other prepositions + **-ing** (e.g. **attempt at -ing, reason for -ing**, etc.).

C

Some nouns can sometimes be followed either by **of + -ing** or a **to-infinitive** with a similar meaning, usually after **the**:

- Do staff have *the* **opportunity** *of taking* unpaid leave? (or ... *the* **opportunity** *to take* ...)
- The* **aim** *of providing* clean drinking water has been achieved. (or *The* **aim** *to provide* ...)

Also: ambition, idea, option, plan.

However, some nouns, such as **chance, sense** and **way**, have more than one meaning and are followed either by **of + -ing** or a **to-infinitive** depending on which meaning is used. Compare:

- What's the **chance** *of getting* five heads when you toss a coin five times? (= likelihood; *not* ... chance to get ...) *and*
- Will you get the **chance** *to visit* Miki in Japan? (= opportunity; *not* ... of visiting ...)
- He didn't have the **sense** *to move* away from the puddle of water as the bus went past. (= good judgement; *not* ... sense of moving ...) *and*
- Everyone was very friendly and she had a **sense** *of belonging* within a few days of moving to her new school. (= feeling; *not* ... sense to belong ...)
- I've got a new **way** *to cook* rice. (= method; or ... *way* *of cooking* ...) *and*
- She has a really funny **way** *of speaking*. (= manner; *not* ... way to speak)

Note also that **of + -ing** usually follows **no / every / the sole / the slightest / (not) any / with the + intention**, but that we can use either **of + -ing** or a **to-infinitive** in most other cases. Compare:

- I have **no intention** *of lending* Dan any more money. (*not* ... no intention to lend ...) *and*
- He announced his **intention** *to stand* in the election. (or ... **intention** *of standing* ...)

Exercises

93.1 Rewrite the italicised words with a similar meaning using a noun related to the underlined verb. Add an appropriate preposition after the noun. **A**

- I *greatly admire* people who work full time and also study for a university degree.
have great admiration for
- Yasemin is still in hospital but over the last couple of days *her condition has improved*.
- Rashid is very *proud* of his cooking, and is always eager to talk about his recipes.
- The website *advises on* how to lose weight.
- I hate it when people are *cruel* to animals, and would support a ban on hunting.
- We *discussed* the relative merits of CDs and records *for a long time*.
- I had to be *vaccinated against typhoid* before entering the country.
- Benny Carter *significantly influenced* the development of British jazz.
- The city *lacks* affordable housing and many people are homeless.
- There is widespread support for fireworks to be *banned*.

93.2 Complete the sentences with a noun from (i) and either of + -ing or the to-infinitive form of a verb from (ii). **B**

(i)

ability cost decision
failure ~~fear~~ possibility
reason risk sign
unwillingness

(ii)

acknowledge allow buy
~~fly~~ get protect
remember stop transmit
worry

- My mother recently overcame her fear of flying and had a holiday in South Africa.
- The snow has been falling now for two days and shows no
- The government has defended its coal mining in the national park.
- Your blood pressure is a little high, but there is no about it.
- She was kept in isolation to reduce the the virus to other people in the hospital.
- The exercise tests children's a random sequence of numbers.
- The government has been criticised for its the region from flooding.
- The a new car in Europe is expected to fall in the next year.
- I knew that there was little the job with so many applicants.
- It's hard to work with Nik because of his that he ever makes mistakes.

93.3 Complete the sentences with an appropriate verb using either of + -ing or a to-infinitive. Give both forms if both are possible. **C**

- Although Mia said she would think about it, she never had the slightest intention of accepting my suggestion.
- It's going to be cloudy tonight so there is only a fifty-fifty chance the eclipse of the moon.
- It's pouring with rain. I hope David had the sense an umbrella with him.
- The head of the company repeated his intention on his 65th birthday.
- When the History Department closed she was given the option another job.
- Katrin had a very unusual way, keeping her feet firmly on the floor and waving her arms around her head.