

Dear Students,

Further to our discussion today about when to omit the preposition object from a sentence, and when not to omit it, here are more examples to clarify the idea:

The question was why we keep the pronoun “it” in this sentence (unit 4 in the booklet, second Paragraph): “*Friends should always listen to what the other has to say, and they should **give advice only when asked for it;***” if we can omit it from a sentence like this one: “*This is the report that you **asked for***” ?

The answer is that in some structures we may put the prepositional object at or near the end of a clause. This typically happens in four cases:

Wh-questions

When a question word is **the object of a preposition**, the preposition most often comes at the end of the clause.

- **Who** is this present **for**? (informal), or **For whom** is this present? (formal.)
- **What** are you looking **at**? (Less formal than **At what are** you looking?)
- **Who** did you go **to**? (Less formal than **to whom** did you go?)

Infinitive structures

Infinitive complements can have prepositions with them.

- She needs other children **to play with**.
- We need a place **to live in**.

Relative clauses

When a relative pronoun (like that or which) is the object of a preposition, the preposition often goes at the end of a clause.

- This is the report **that** you asked **for**. (Less formal than ... **for which** you asked,) **which is the example given in class today**.
- This is the book I told you **about** (Less formal than ... **about** which I told you.)

Passives

In passive structures, prepositions go with their verbs.

- She **was operated on** last night.
- I hate being **stared at**.
- This is the report **I was asked for, which is also the example given in class today**.

However, when the passive form has two objects: an indirect object and a direct object, which is typically the case with verbs such as give, lend, send, show, the structure of the passive will be:

Subject [direct object] + passive voice of the verb + indirect object /preposition + agent (prepositional object)

Examples:

- *Daily newspapers were given to him every day (by someone).* We cannot say, for example, ***Daily newspapers were given to.***
- ***Give advice when asked for it*** (which is a reduced form from the sentence: ***Give advice when you are asked for it*** (by a friend.) In this case, too, we cannot say: ***give advice when you are asked for*** because we cannot omit the object/agent of the preposition in a two-object passive form. This was the example in the booklet discussed today.
- It is also important to note that the clause “***when asked for it***” here is NOT a relative clause, unlike the clause in the sentence “***This is the report that you asked for.***” The former is, however, a conditional clause. We can re-arrange the sentence as follows:

When asked for it, give your friend advice, and NOT, when asked for, give your friend advice.

So, the two sentences we discussed in class this morning are structurally different. One has a single-object, and the other has two objects, one of which is a prepositional object or what we call a prepositional agent. Also, one sentence contains a relative clause, and the other has a conditional clause.

I hope this makes more sense now! Please don't hesitate to ask questions if you feel that you need more on this.

Best,

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