



# E 303: TECHNICAL WRITING

School of Literature and Languages  
Louisiana Tech University



## Lecture 4b Memo

**To:** Mr. Merchant's English 303 students  
**From:** Mr. David M. Merchant, English Instructor  
**Subject:** Lecture 4b: Preposition Use  
**Date:** March 20, 2020

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The purpose of this memo is to give an overview of audience, purpose, and context, as well as the first discussion of English usage in the context of technical writing.

### Preposition Use

Not all prepositions at the end of a sentence are stand-alone prepositions—they are actually part of a phrasal verb and it is absolutely OK to end a sentence with a verb. Just like a noun phrase can contain non-nouns (adverbs, adjectives, and even verbs in the form of participles) but is still treated as a noun despite the non-noun components, a phrasal verb contains a preposition but is still treated as a verb.

From Mignon Fogarty (Grammar Girl):

English has a type of verb called a phrasal verb. These are verbs made up of multiple words, and one is always a preposition. “Cheer up,” “run over,” “log on,” and “leave off” are all examples of phrasal verbs, and often sentences that use phrasal verbs end with a preposition:

- I wish he would cheer up.
- You should leave it off.

Those are perfectly acceptable sentences.

However, if you can replace a phrasal verb with a non-phrasal verb, you should: for example, instead of “show up” you can use “appear” or “arrive.”

If you can remove a preposition and the sentence still makes sense, remove it. Otherwise, make sure you are using the appropriate preposition (for example, use “based on” instead of “based off” and definitely instead of “based off of.”

From Mignon Fogarty:

The problem is that “Where are you at?” doesn't need the preposition at the end. If you say, “Where are you?” it means the same thing. So the “at” is unnecessary. You should leave it off.

People often throw extraneous prepositions into the middle of sentences...Instead of saying "Squiggly jumped off of the dock," it's better to say, "Squiggly jumped off the dock." You see? You don't need to say "off of the dock"; "off the dock" says the same thing without the preposition.

Another example is "outside of" when "outside" by itself would do just fine. You should say, "He's outside the door," not, "He's outside of the door."

## Closing

If you have questions, please contact me via email or the course Moodle page (forum or messaging service). Do not forget to do your assigned readings and to read *Merchant's English Usage Guide for Technical Writers* located at [davidmmerchant.com/merchants-english-usage-guide-for-technical-writers/](http://davidmmerchant.com/merchants-english-usage-guide-for-technical-writers/) and refer to it as you write.

## References

Fogarty, Mignon. "Ending a Sentence With a Preposition." *Quick and Dirty Tips*. Macmillan Holdings, LLC, March 31, 2011, [www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/ending-a-sentence-with-a-preposition](http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/ending-a-sentence-with-a-preposition)

Mills, Bonnie, "Phrasal Verbs." *Quick and Dirty Tips*. Macmillan Holdings, LLC, July 4, 2008, [www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/phrasal-verbs](http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/phrasal-verbs)