

English Prepositions – ‘by’ vs ‘until’ (PT: ‘até’)

In English, there is a difference between ‘by’ (PT: “até/no máximo/antes de”) and ‘until’ (PT: “até”). Here are some examples:

by (a deadline)
(= *before*)

We must finish the project **by** Friday.
I usually eat dinner **by** 8pm.
I have to pay the bill **by** the end of the month.
I will finish painting the house **by** the end of the year.
She will leave hospital **by** next week.

until (the end of a period)
(*continuous context*)

We stayed in the restaurant **until** it closed.
I work every day **until** 6pm.
I will work at home **until** the end of the pandemic.
We have to stay here **until** the doctor calls us.
I’m going to eat **until** I’m full!

Exercise. Complete the sentences with ‘by’ or ‘until’.

1. I must finish my homework _____ 9pm.
2. I want to study English _____ I am fluent.
3. The shops are open _____ midday on Saturdays.
4. He has to contact his bank manager _____ midday on Friday.
5. I hope to become a manager _____ the year 2030.
6. I intend to work _____ I am 65 years old.

Suggested video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGPR-qr3cm0> (10 mins)

More exercises: <https://www.usingenglish.com/quizzes/8.html>
<https://www.grammarbank.com/by-vs-until-exercise.html>

More about ‘by’

The preposition ‘by’ has many uses in English. Here are some examples:

1) PT: **com**

He is worried **by** her behaviour.
I will pay **by** credit card.
What do you mean **by** that?

2) PT: **por**

- He was hit **by** a car.
- The book was written **by** Stephen King.
- The school is funded **by** the government.
- I will send the document **by** e-mail.
- He walks **by** my house on his way to work.

- She went out **by** the front door.
- We charge **by** the hour.
- The land measures 40m **by** 20m.
- Q: What is 15 divided **by** 3? A: 5.

3) Transport (PT: de)

- I go to work **by** car.
- We always travel **by** plane.

4) Close

- I have a house **by** the sea.
- Please come here and sit **by** me.
- Q: Where is your car? A: It's **by** the park.

5) Quantity

- Eggs are sold **by** the dozen.
- House prices fell **by** 10% last year.

6) Vocabulary

- nearby Close to here
- standby Wait for an immediate opportunity
- passer-by Somebody who doesn't stop
- thereby Because of that
- hereby Because of this
- whereby by which / by what

7) Expressions

- **by** now (até agora) He should be at work **by now**.
- **by** law (por lei) You shouldn't smoke in public places, **by law**.
- one **by** one (um por um) The students entered the classroom **one by one**.
- day **by** day (dia a dia) I follow the law **day by day**.
- **by** myself (sozinho/a) Last year I travelled to Europe **by myself**.
- **by** me (por mim) It's fine **by me**.
- **by** mistake (sem querer) I did it **by mistake**.
- stand **by** (apoiar) I always **stand by** my wife.
- swing **by** (passar por) Can you **swing by** my house tomorrow?
- side **by** side (lado a lado) We always work **side by side**.