

English Grammar: Sentences which finish with a preposition

In English you will often see or hear a sentence which finishes with a preposition. For example:

- That's what friends are **for**.
- Dinner starts at 6 o'clock, so don't come **before**.
- That's the French guy that I was talking you **about**.
- There's nothing to be afraid **of**.
- This is what we've been waiting **for**.
- English grammar isn't something to mess **with**.
- There must be something worth living **for**.
- Classical music is very relaxing to listen **to**.

Language experts say that you shouldn't end a sentence with a preposition. They recommend alternative structures. For example:

- **For** this we have friends.
- Dinner starts at 6 o'clock, so don't come **before** then.
- The French guy I was talking **about** is over there.
- There's nothing **of** which to be afraid.
- English grammar isn't something **with** which to mess.
- There must be something **for** which it's worth living.
- It is very relaxing to listen **to** classical music.

However, these sentences sound formal or pretentious, so natives prefer to use the prepositions at the end. Nowadays, it is commonly accepted to use a preposition at the end of a sentence. A consequence of having a preposition at the end of a sentence is a possible repeated preposition. For example:

- There's nothing to be afraid **of, of** course.
- This is what we've been waiting **for, for** ages.

If you are writing a formal document, it is better to avoid using a preposition at the end of a sentence.

Exercise 1. Change these sentences to put the preposition at the end.

1. I don't know in which car to go. _____
2. I have no tests for which to prepare. _____
3. There is nothing about which to think. _____
4. There is nobody for whom to search. _____
5. I don't know to which country to go. _____
6. I don't know anybody on whom I can depend. _____

Questions which finish with a preposition

In Portuguese, it's common to start a question with a preposition. For example:

- **De** onde você é?
- **Para** que servem os amigos?
- **Aonde** você vai?
- **Em** qual hotel você vai ficar?
- **Com** quem você está falando?

But in English, we start questions with a question word (what, where, how, etc.) and, if a preposition is needed, we put it at the **end** of the question:

- **Where** are you **from**?
- **What** are friends good **for**?
- **Where** are you going **to**?
- **Which** hotel will you stay **in**?
- **Who** are you speaking **with**?

This phenomenon is very common with phrasal verbs. For example:

- When did you **get up**?
- Why did you **turn** the TV **on**?
- What time does our flight **take off**?
- What are you **looking for**?

In Old English, the preposition was used at the **start**, like in Portuguese, but in Modern English, it is used at the **end** of a question. Go figure! For example:

Old English	Modern English
For what did you do that?	What did you do that for?
To where are you going?	Where are you going to?
In which hotel will you stay?	Which hotel will you stay in?
To what do I owe the pleasure?	What do I owe the pleasure to?
To whom should I give this?	Who should I give this to?
On which table are the books?	Which table are the books on?
For whom is this present?	Who is this present for?
For when should I prepare?	When should I prepare for?
At what time will you arrive?	What time will you arrive at?
At what airport will you arrive?	What airport will you arrive at?
For whose benefit did you say that?	Whose benefit did you say that for?

Exercise 2. Translate these questions to English, putting a preposition at the end.

1. A que você está se referindo? _____
2. Para quem você deu o seu livro? _____
3. Em qual bolso você colocou a chave? _____
4. Aonde ele vai todo dia? _____
5. Para quem eu devo falar? _____
6. Para quem você está fazendo jantar? _____

