

Prépositions de temps - French Temporal Prepositions

Many French students are confused by the French prepositions for **time**. The problem is that there are so many different French temporal prepositions with different uses: **à**, **en**, **dans**, **depuis**, **pendant**, **durant**, and **pour** (although *pour* is almost never used to express time).

The following is a quick summary of French **temporal prepositions**. Click on the links for more detailed explanations of each preposition, with examples and comparisons.

The preposition **à** expresses the time at which an event occurs:

Nous mangeons à 8h00. We eat at 8:00.

Il va parler à midi. He'll speak at noon.

En expresses the **length of time** an action takes or the **month**, **season**, or **year** in which something takes place:

Nous avons mangé en une heure. We ate in an hour.

Il va parler en hiver. He'll speak in the winter.

Dans indicates the **amount of time** before an action **will begin**:

Nous mangerons dans 20 minutes. We'll eat in 20 minutes.

Il va parler dans une heure. He'll speak in an hour.

Depuis refers to the **duration** of something that is **still going on** in the present, or was still going on when something else happened:

Nous mangeons depuis une heure. We've been eating for an hour.

Il parle depuis 5 minutes. He's been speaking for 5 minutes.

Il travaillait depuis 10 jours quand je l'ai vu. He'd been working for 10 days when I saw him.

Pendant and **durant** refer to the **entire duration** of an action (a common mistake is to use *pour* here - don't!):

Nous avons mangé pendant/durant une heure. We ate for an hour.

Il peut parler durant/pendant 15 minutes. He can speak for 15 minutes.

Pour is used only to indicate the **duration** of an event in the **future**:

Il va parler pour 15 minutes. He's going to speak for 15 minutes.

Note that **pour**, **pendant**, and **durant** are all acceptable here.