Like [adjectives](http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/adjecterm.htm) and [adverbs](http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/adverbterm.htm), [**prepositional phrases**](http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/prephraseterm.htm) add meaning to the [nouns](http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/nounterm.htm) and [verbs](http://grammar.about.com/od/tz/g/verbterm.htm) in our sentences. There are two prepositional phrases in the following sentence:

The steamy air *in the kitchen* reeked *of stale food*.

The first prepositional phrase--*in the kitchen*--[modifies](http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/modterm.htm) the noun *air*; the second--*of stale food*--modifies the verb *reeked*. The two phrases provide information that helps us understand the sentence.

**The Two Parts of a Prepositional Phrase**  
A prepositional phrase has two basic parts: a [preposition](http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/prepositerm.htm) plus a noun or a [pronoun](http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/pronounterm.htm) that serves as the [object of the preposition](http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/objprepterm.htm). A preposition is a word that shows *how* a noun or a pronoun is related to another word in a sentence.

**Building Sentences With Prepositional Phrases**  
Prepositional phrases often do more than just add minor details to a sentence: they may be needed for a sentence to make sense. Consider the [vagueness](http://grammar.about.com/od/tz/g/Vagueness.htm) of this sentence without prepositional phrases: *The workers gather a rich variety and distribute it.*

Now see how the sentence comes into focus when we add prepositional phrases:

*From many sources*, the workers *at the Community Food Bank* gather a rich variety *of surplus and unsalable food* and distribute it *to soup kitchens, day-care centers, and homes for the elderly*.

Notice how these added prepositional phrases give us more information about certain nouns and verbs in the sentence:

Like the other [simple modifiers](http://grammar.about.com/od/basicsentencegrammar/a/adjadv.htm), prepositional phrases are not merely ornaments; they add details that can help us *understand* a sentence.

**PRACTICE:** Combine the following sentences into one clear sentence. Keep in mind that many combinations are possible, and there is not one “correct” answer.

1. A mouse darted.  
   It darted across the salad bar.  
   This happened during the luncheon.
2. We traveled this summer.  
   We traveled by train.  
   We traveled from Biloxi.  
   We traveled to Dubuque.
3. The convertible swerved, crashed, and caromed.  
   It swerved off the road.  
   It crashed through the guardrail.  
   It caromed off a maple tree.
4. Mick planted seeds.  
   He planted them in his garden.  
   He did this after the quarrel.  
   The quarrel was with Mr. Jimmy.
5. Grandpa dropped his teeth.  
   His teeth were false.  
   His teeth dropped into a glass.  
   There was prune juice in the glass.
6. Lucy played.  
   She was behind the sofa.  
   She was with her friend.  
   Her friend was imaginary.  
   They played for hours.
7. There was a man.  
   He wore a chicken costume.  
   He dashed across the field.  
   He did this before the ballgame.  
   The ballgame was on Sunday afternoon.
8. The gray-flannel fog closed off the Salinas Valley.  
   It was the fog of winter.  
   The fog was high.  
   The Salinas Valley was closed off from the sky.  
   And the Salinas Valley was closed off from all the rest of the world.
9. I climbed to my perch.  
   I did this one night.  
   The night was hot.  
   The night was in the summer.  
   The night was in 1949.  
   It was my usual perch.  
   My perch was in the press box.  
   The press box was cramped.  
   The press box was above the stands.  
   The stands were wooden.  
   These were the stands of the baseball park.  
   The baseball park was in Lumberton, North Carolina.