Prepositions

There is no ONE rule for how to use *prepositions*. Rather, they are divided into several classes: time, place, introducing objects, and direction.

1) PREPOSITIONS of TIME:

One point in time: ON, AT, IN

*Examples:*
1. The baby girl was born ON December 15, 1981. (A specific DAY in time)
2. The meeting is AT 11:00 ON Saturday. (A specific TIME on a specific DAY)
3. I will be home from work IN the afternoon. (A specific PART of the day)

Extended periods of time: SINCE, FOR, BY, FROM-TO/UNTIL, DURING, WITH (IN)

*Examples:
1. I have lived in Tucson SINCE I was four years old. (An EXTENDED period of time BEGINNING at four years old and CONTINUING until present)
2. I have attended the University of Arizona FOR three years and have one year left until I graduate. (An EXTENDED period of time)
3. I will be home BY five o’clock. (An EXTENDED period of time from whenever the speaker said that until 5:00)
4. Class registration is FROM 8:00am TO/UNTIL 5:00pm. (An EXTENDED period of time FROM 8:00 TO/UNTIL 5:00)
5. I go to school DURING the week and go home DURING the weekend. (Two EXTENDED periods of time: the week, the weekend)
6. To win the race, you have to run the entire distance WITHIN five minutes. (The EXTENDED time period is INSIDE of five minutes)

2) PREPOSITIONS of PLACE:

General PREPOSITIONS of place: IN (inside), ON (surface), AT (general location)

*Examples:*
1. It is raining and I am going IN the house.
2. The book is ON the table.
3. The store is located AT the corner of the street.
PREPOSITIONS describing a position of height: OVER, ABOVE

Examples:
1. The baby climbed OVER the toys. (The toys were UNDERNEATH her)
2. The sky is ABOVE me. (I am UNDERNEATH the sky)

PREPOSITIONS describing a position lower than something else: UNDER/UNDERNEATH, BELOW

Examples:
1. The baby crawled UNDERNEATH the table. (The table is ABOVE her)
2. When you fly in an airplane, the city is BELOW you. (You are ABOVE the city)

PREPOSITIONS describing a point that is close by: NEAR, BY, NEXT TO

Examples:
1. The lady in the red hat is standing NEAR the exit to the theater. (The exit is CLOSE to where the lady is standing)
2. The chair is by the table. (The chair is CLOSE to where the table is located)
3. The bathroom is NEXT TO the entrance. (The bathroom is CLOSE to the entrance)

3) PREPOSITIONS TO INTRODUCE OBJECTS:

PREPOSITIONS are sometimes used to introduce the OBJECT of a verb. Some of the most common of these include AT, FOR, OF (or about).

Examples with verbs:

AT: (glance, laugh, look)
1. The boy turned around to glance AT his mother.
2. The girls laughed AT the clown.
3. The man looked AT the reflection on the lake.

FOR: (hope, look, wish)
1. She hopes FOR a good score on her test.
2. The company looks FOR motivated people to hire.
3. Many people wish FOR fewer tests.

OF: (dream, think)
1. It is so hot I am dreaming OF many cold swimming pools.
2. Many people think OF Thanksgiving when they see turkeys.
4) PREPOSITIONS OF DIRECTION

Each of these types of prepositions has several meanings:

**AT:**
1. A point, either a physical location or a point in time
2. A target

*Examples:*
1. The dance will be held AT seven o’clock in the evening. (Point in time)
2. The boy threw the ball AT his sister. (Target)

**ON:**
1. Physical contact with a surface
2. Along
3. A specific date or day of the week
4. Referring to communicative technology
5. About or regarding to a topic

*Examples:*
1. The boy is standing ON the diving board. (The SURFACE of the board)
2. The plane is ON the runway. (The plane is ALONG the runway)
3. The birthday party is ON Friday. (Friday is the SPECIFIC day of the week)
4. My favorite reporter is ON television right now. (T.V. as communicative technology)
5. The essay is ON anti-slavery laws. (The TOPIC is anti-slavery laws)

**IN:**
1. Contained or enclosed
2. Time period or year
3. Referring to money
4. Referring to language
5. Referring to a city, state or country

*Examples:*
1. The monkey is IN a cage. (The monkey is ENCLOSED in the cage)
2. Columbus discovered America IN 1492. (The YEAR Columbus discovered America)
3. How much does the sandwich cost IN dimes? (The COST is in dimes)
4. She said “I love you” IN Spanish. (The LANGUAGE was Spanish)
5. University of Arizona students live IN Tucson. (The CITY is Tucson)