

# Verb + preposition 1 to and at

## A

### Verb + to

**talk / speak TO** somebody (*with* is also possible but less usual)

- ☐ Who was that man you were **talking to**?

**listen TO** ...

- ☐ We spent the evening **listening to** music. (*not* listening music)

**write** (a letter) **TO** ...

- ☐ I **wrote to** the hotel complaining about the poor service we had received.

**apologise TO** somebody (for ...)

- ☐ They **apologised to me** for what happened. (*not* They apologised me)

**explain** something **TO** somebody

- ☐ Can you **explain this word to me**? (*not* explain me this word)

**explain / describe** (to somebody) what/how/why ...

- ☐ I **explained to them** why I was worried. (*not* I explained them)
- ☐ Let me **describe to you** what I saw. (*not* Let me describe you)

## B

We do not use **to** with these verbs:

**phone / telephone / call** somebody

- ☐ Did you **phone your father** yesterday? (*not* phone to your father)

**answer** somebody/something

- ☐ He refused to **answer my question**. (*not* answer to my question)

**ask** somebody

- ☐ Can I **ask you** a question? (*not* ask to you)

**thank** somebody (for something)

- ☐ He **thanked me** for helping him. (*not* He thanked to me)

## C

### Verb + at

**look / stare / glance AT** ... , **have a look / take a look AT** ...

- ☐ Why are you **looking at** me like that?

**laugh AT** ...

- ☐ I look stupid with this haircut. Everybody will **laugh at** me.

**aim / point** (something) **AT** ... , **shoot / fire** (a gun) **AT** ...

- ☐ Don't **point that knife at** me. It's dangerous.
- ☐ We saw someone with a gun **shooting at** birds, but he didn't hit any.

## D

Some verbs can be followed by **at** or **to**, with a difference of meaning. For example:

**shout AT** somebody (when you are angry)

- ☐ He got very angry and started **shouting at** me.

**shout TO** somebody (so that they can hear you)

- ☐ He **shouted to** me from the other side of the street.

**throw** something **AT** somebody/something (in order to hit them)

- ☐ Somebody **threw** an egg **at** the minister.

**throw** something **TO** somebody (for somebody to catch)

- ☐ Lisa shouted 'Catch!' and **threw** the keys **to** me from the window.

# Exercises

## Unit 132

132.1 You ask somebody to explain things that you don't understand. Write questions beginning **Can you explain ... ?**

- 1 (I don't understand this word.)  
*Can you explain this word to me?*
- 2 (I don't understand what you mean.)  
*Can you explain to me what you mean?*
- 3 (I don't understand this question.)  
Can you explain .....
- 4 (I don't understand the problem.)  
Can .....
- 5 (I don't understand how this machine works.)  
.....
- 6 (I don't understand what I have to do.)  
.....

132.2 Put in **to** where necessary. If the sentence is already complete, leave the space empty.

- 1 I know who she is, but I've never spoken *to* her.
- 2 Why didn't you answer *-* my letter?
- 3 I like to listen ..... the radio while I'm having breakfast.
- 4 We'd better phone ..... the restaurant to reserve a table.
- 5 'Did Mike apologise ..... you?' 'Yes, he said he was very sorry.'
- 6 I explained ..... everybody the reasons for my decision.
- 7 I thanked ..... everybody for all the help they had given me.
- 8 Ask me what you like, and I'll try and answer ..... your questions.
- 9 Mike described ..... me exactly what happened.
- 10 Karen won't be able to help you, so there's no point in asking ..... her.

132.3 Complete the sentences. Use the following verbs (in the correct form) + the correct preposition:

~~explain~~ glance ~~laugh~~ listen point speak throw throw

- 1 I look stupid with this haircut. Everybody will *laugh at* me.
- 2 I don't understand this. Can you *explain* it *to* me?
- 3 Sue and Kevin had an argument and now they're not ..... one another.
- 4 Be careful with those scissors! Don't ..... them ..... me!
- 5 I ..... my watch to see what the time was.
- 6 Please ..... me! I've got something important to tell you.
- 7 Don't ..... stones ..... the birds! It's cruel.
- 8 If you don't want that sandwich, ..... it ..... the birds. They'll eat it.

132.4 Put in **to** or **at**.

- 1 I wrote *to* the hotel complaining about the poor service we had received.
- 2 Look ..... these flowers. Aren't they pretty?
- 3 Please don't shout ..... me! Try to calm down.
- 4 I saw Sue as I was cycling along the road. I shouted ..... her, but she didn't hear me.
- 5 Don't listen ..... what he says. He doesn't know what he's talking about.
- 6 What's so funny? What are you laughing ..... ?
- 7 Do you think I could have a look ..... your magazine, please?
- 8 I'm a bit lonely. I need somebody to talk .....
- 9 She was so angry she threw a book ..... the wall.
- 10 The woman sitting opposite me on the train kept staring ..... me.
- 11 Can I speak ..... you a moment? There's something I want to ask you.