

Chapter 26

Prepositional Form of the Verb

Unlike in English, some Swahili verbs can be made into prepositional forms, the preposition is implied in the meaning of the verb. When the prepositional form of the verb is used, it eliminates the use of the preposition. Prepositional verbs convey a range of meanings depending on the context. They can convey the meaning of doing something to, for, or on behalf of someone. It can also be used to express motion towards or away from something or someone. Most prepositional verbs end with *-ia*, *-ea*, *-lia* or *-lea* as will be taught below.

Section A: Prepositional verbs ending with *-ia*

Bantu verbs, including Monosyllabic verbs, where the 2nd last syllable contains A, I or U, are made prepositional by inserting *-i-* before the final vowel as shown in the examples below:

lala – sleep = *lalia* – sleep on

Ofisa tawala alinunua mkeka wa kulalia. – The Administrative Officer bought a mat to sleep on.

pika – cook = *pikia* – cook for/with

Utawapikia wakalimani? – Will you cook for the interpreters?

la – eat = *lia* – eat with

Alikulia uma. – He/She ate with a fork.

Bantu verbs ending in double vowels *-aa* or *-ia* or *-ua* are made prepositional by inserting *-li-* between the two vowels as shown in the examples below:

kaa – sit = *kalia* – sit with/for/on

Godoro la kukalia limechanika. – The mattress for sitting on is torn.

ingia – enter = *ingilia* – enter with/for

Mlango wa kuingilia ulifungwa. – The door for entering was closed.

chukua – take = *chukulia* – take with/for

Hatukumchukulia baiskeli yake. – We did not take the person’s bicycle for him/her.

Arabic verbs ending with *-i* are made prepositional by suffixing it with *-a* as a final vowel as shown in the example below:

rudi – return = *rudia* – return to/for

Mohamed alirudia mwavuli wake. – Mohamed returned for his umbrella.

Arabic verbs ending with *-u* are made prepositional by dropping their final vowel and replacing it *-ia* as shown in the example below:

jibu – answer = *jibia* – reply to/for

Mama alinjibia barua pepe zangu. – Mother responded to my emails for me.

Note: Not all verbs which end with *-ia* convey a prepositional meaning. For example, the verb *fagia* simply means “sweep.”

Practice Exercise A

Translate into English.

1. *Tulifikiria sana jambo hili kabla ya kufanya uamuzi.*
2. *Shangazi aliuzua ngazi yake ya kupandia.*
3. *Sikumlipia mdhamini wangu deni lake.*
4. *Alifikia Hoteli ya Intercontinental katika mwezi wa Januari.*
5. *Mwiko wa kupakulia chakula umeungua.*
6. *Mke wake alimzalia watoto wa kike wazuri watatu.*
7. *Tumebadilisha ufunguo wa kufungulia mlango.*
8. *Walimkaribia adui kufyatua risasi.*
9. *Atamchukulia sindano ya kufumia sweta.*
10. *Nyanya hakumpakulia mtoto chakula cha mchana.*

11. *Utanunua viatu vya kukimbilia?*
12. *Mpokezi wangu alininunulia zawadi nzuri sana.*
13. *Simon alirudia darasa moja kwa sababu alikuwa mgonjwa.*
14. *Utafagilia ufagio upi?*
15. *Mohammed atatulindia nyumba yetu.*

Section B: Prepositional verbs ending with *-ea*

Bantu verbs where the 2nd last syllable contains E, O or Y or Monosyllabic verbs containing Y are made prepositional by inserting *-e-* before the final vowel as shown in the examples below:

- soma* – read = *somea* – read for
Unasomea nini? – What are you (sing.) reading for?
leta – bring = *letea* – bring for/use to bring
Tutawaletea stempu kutoka Uchina. – We will bring you (pl.) stamps from China.
nywa – drink = *nywea* – drink with
Walinywea kikombe. – They drank with a cup.

Bantu verbs ending in double vowels *-ea* or *-oa* are made prepositional by inserting *-le-* between the two vowels as shown in the examples below:

- pokea* – receive = *pokelea* – receive for
Mfuko wa kupokelea pesa. – A bag for receiving money.
zoa – pick up = *zolea* – pick up with
Alizolea takataka na chombo ghali. – He/She picked up the garbage with an expensive pan.

Arabic verbs ending with *-e* are made prepositional by suffixing them with *-a* as shown in the example below:

- samehe* – forgive = *samehea* – forgive for
Hana huruma ya kuwasamehea makosa yao. – He/She has no compassion for forgiving their mistakes.

Note: Not all verbs which end with *-ea* convey a prepositional meaning. For example, the verb *lea* simply means “bring up or raise a child.”

Practice Exercise B

Translate into Swahili.

16. My brother has read a poem of hope for the disabled children.
17. He visited Dubai last year.
18. They removed for us our luggage from the custom's booth.
19. The cook brought for us tea with milk.
20. Where do those youths come from?
21. We did not study with diligence for this job.
22. He went to receive the parcel for them from the post office.
23. The clerk favoured his neighbour's application.
24. He cooled off the porridge for the old man.
25. The judge stared at the accused.
26. They bought a tool for pruning fruit trees.
27. A helicopter for rescuing people has crashed.
28. They sent for him his cheque from the lottery office.
29. The sick person was given a container for keeping medicine.
30. I prayed for his success.

Section C: Other types of Prepositional Verbs

Some prepositional verbs do not fall into the two categories presented above.

1. Some verbs are prepositional in their basic form.

uliza – ask

Mgeni aliniuliza njia ya kwenda sokoni. – The guest asked me the road to the market.

tafuta – look for

Mabaharia waliitafuta meli jana. – The sailors searched for the ship yesterday.

Note: When the verb *tafuta* is changed to *tafutia*, it translates as “looking for something on behalf of someone.” For example:

Mabaharia waliitafutia serikali meli jana. – The sailors searched for the ship yesterday on behalf of the government.

2. Some verbs convey special meanings in their prepositional forms.

amka – wake up = *amkia* – greet

Nilimwamkia mzee kwa kusema “shikamoo.” – I greeted the elder by saying “shikamoo.”

nuka – stink = *nukia* – smell(s) good

Waridi linanukia. – The rose smells good.

Practice Exercise C

Translate the following sentences into Swahili.

31. The lawyer asked the client questions in the court.
32. The host has treated his dignitaries well.
33. The shopkeeper used trickery to win.
34. The dog owner will give his dog a bone.
35. He did not reach the fruits because he is short.

Section D: Other verb typologies derived from Prepositional verbs

Prepositional verbs can be changed into other verb typologies as shown below:

Prepositional Passive verb:

The prepositional passive verb is formed by inserting *-w-* before the final vowel of the prepositional verb. For example:

Prepositional form: *andikia* – write with/for/to

Dada yangu aliwaandikia barua wazazi wetu. – My sister wrote a letter to our parents.

Passive form: *andikwa* – written by

Barua iliandikwa kwa wazazi wetu na dada yangu. – A letter was written to our parents by my sister.

Prepositional Passive form: *andikiwa* – written for

Wazazi wetu waliandikiwa barua na dada yangu. – Our parents were written a letter by my sister.

In Swahili, only the direct object (in this case *barua*) can act as the subject of a passive sentence. This is in contrast to English where either a direct or indirect object can act as the subject of a passive sentence. If you wish the indirect object (in this case *wazazi*) to act as the subject of a passive sentence, you must use a prepositional passive form of the verb.

Prepositional Reciprocal verb:

The prepositional reciprocal verb is formed by suffixing *-na* to the prepositional verb. For example:

Prepositional Reciprocal form: *andikiana* – write to each other
Bondia na refa waliandikiana barua. – The boxer and the referee wrote each other (a) letter(s).

Note: Reciprocal verb typology will be covered in the following chapter.

Practice Exercise D

Change the following prepositional sentence into prepositional passive.

36. *Mwindaji aliwachomea mahindi wahifadhi wa wanyama.*
37. *Jamaa yake kutoka Ulaya alimpigia simu jirani.*
38. *Fundi bomba alitumia spana kupindia bomba.*
39. *Nilimpandia maua mwenyenyumba.*
40. *Mashine ilimkamulia taulo mwanamichezo.*

New Vocabulary

- adui/ma-*: enemy(ies)
- bidii*: effort(s), diligence
- bondia/ma-*: boxer(s)
- chakula/vy- cha/vya mchana*: lunch(es)
- chana*: tear
- fagia*: sweep
- fikia*: stay at, reach
- fuma*: weave, knit
- fundi/ma- bomba*: plumber(s)
- fyatua risasi*: fire a bullet

godoro/ma-: mattress(es)
hindi/ma-: grain(s) of maize/corn
hundi/ma-: cheque(s)
huruma: compassion
kamua: squeeze, wring
karani/ma-: clerk(s)
kibanda/vi-: booth(s)
kodoa macho: stare
komboa: rescue
linda: guard
mafanikio: success(es)
mashine: machine(s)
mhamini/wa-: sponsor(s)
meli: ship(s)
mfupa/mi-: bone(s)
mhifadhi/wa- wa wanyama: game keeper(s)
mkalimani/wa-: interpreter(s)
mkeka/mi-: mat(s)
mlemavu/wa-: disabled person(s)
mpokezi/wa-: receptionist(s)
mshitakiwa/wa-: accused person(s)
mtukufu/wa-: dignitary(ies)
mwanamichezo/wa-: athlete(s)
mwavuli/mi-: umbrella(s)
mwenyembwa/wenyembwa: dog owner(s)
mwenyenyumba/wenyenyumba: houseowner(s)
mwiko/mi-: serving spoon(s)
ngazi: ladder(s), stair(s)
ofisa/ma- tawala: administrative officer(s)
ofisi: office(s)
omba: ask, beg
pendelea: favour
piga: hit, kick, play (music)
pogoa: prune
refa: referee(s)
shairi/ma-: poem(s)
spana: spanner(s), wrench(es)
stempu: stamp(s)
sweta: sweater(s)

taulo: towel(s)
tenda: do, treat
udanganyifu: trickery
ungua: burn
waridi/ma-: rose(s)
zoa: pick up

Key to Exercises

Answers to Practice Exercise A

1. We thought a lot about this matter before making a decision.
2. Aunt sold her ladder for climbing.
3. I did not pay for my sponsor's debt.
4. He/She stayed at the Intercontinental Hotel in January.
5. The spoon for serving has been burned.
6. His wife bore him three beautiful daughters.
7. We have changed the key for opening the door.
8. They approached the enemy to open fire.
9. He/She will take for him/her the needle for weaving a sweater.
10. The grandmother did not serve lunch to the child.
11. Will you buy shoes for running?
12. My receptionist bought me a very good present.
13. Simon repeated one grade because he was sick.
14. Which broom will you use for sweeping?
15. Mohammed will guard our house for us.

Answers to Practice Exercise B

16. *Kaka yangu amewasomea shairi la matumaini watoto walemavu.*
17. *Alitembelea Dubai mwaka jana.*
18. *Wametuondolea mizigo yetu kutoka kibanda cha forodha.*
19. *Mpishi alituletea chai ya maziwa.*
20. *Vijana wale wametokea wapi?*
21. *Hatukusomea kwa bidii kazi hii.*
22. *Alikwenda kuwapokelea kifurushi chao kutoka posta.*
23. *Karani alilipendelea ombi la jirani yake.*
24. *Alimpozea mzee uji.*
25. *Jaji alimkodolea macho mshitakiwa.*
26. *Walinunua chombo cha kupogolea miti ya matunda.*

27. *Helikopta ya kukombolea watu imeanguka.*
28. *Walimpelekea hundi yake kutoka ofisi ya bahati nasibu.*
29. *Mgonjwa alipewa chombo cha kuwekea dawa.*
30. *Nilimwombea mafanikio.*

Answers to Practice Exercise C

31. *Mwanasheria alimwuliza mteja maswali mahakamani.*
32. *Mwenyeji amewatendea watukufu vizuri.*
33. *Mwenye duka alitumia udanganyifu kushinda.*
34. *Mwenyembwa atampa mbwa wake mfupa.*
35. *Hakufikia matunda kwa sababu ni mfupi.*

Answers to Practice Exercise D

36. *Wahifadhi wa wanyama walichomewa mahindi na mwindaji.*
37. *Jirani alipigiwa simu na jamaa yake kutoka Ulaya.*
38. *Bomba lilipindiwa kutumia spana na fundi bomba.*
39. *Mwenyenumba alipandiwa maua na mimi.*
40. *Mwanamichezo alikamuliwa taulo kwa mashine.*

