

Prepositions, Postpositions & Paired Constructions

Daçek | English explanations • Kurmanji examples • Expanded reference tables

Learning objectives — Armancên fêrbûnê

Learn core simple prepositions, relational expressions, paired constructions, time and direction phrases, and the oblique forms they commonly govern. Understand why English prepositions do not map one-to-one onto Kurmanji.

1. What are adpositions? — Daçek çi ne?

A preposition precedes its complement (ji min — from me); a postposition follows its complement (ji min re — to/for me, where re follows the complement); and a circumpositional or paired construction has elements on both sides (di malê de — in the house). In teaching materials, multiword sequences such as li ser maseyê are often called compound prepositional expressions. Terminology differs across grammars; these categories are not always interchangeable.

2. Core prepositions — Daçekên pêşîn

Kurmanji	English function	Example (Kurmanji — English)
ji	from; of; than (comparison)	Ez ji malê tîm. — I come from home.
bi	with; by; using	Ez bi otobêse diçim. — I go by bus.
li	at; in; on (context-dependent)	Ew li malê ye. — She/he is at home.
bo	for; to (regional/formal variation)	Ev pirtûk bo te ye. — This book is for you.
berî	before	Berî dersê ez dixwînim. — I study before class.
piştî	after	Piştî dersê ez diçim malê. — I go home after class.
bê	without	Ez bê te naçim. — I will not go without you.
heta / heya	until; as far as	Ez heta sibê dimînim. — I stay until tomorrow.
wek / weke	like; as	Ew wek mamosteyekî diaxive. — He speaks like a teacher.
ji bo	for; for the purpose of	Ev ji bo te ye. — This is for you.

3. A note on classification

Words such as *berî* and *piştî* are placed before their complements in the examples above, so they should not be described as postpositions merely because English says “before/after.” The form *re* in *ji min re* is a clearer example of a following element. Not every expression containing two words is a circumposition.

4. Place: common multiword expressions

Kurmanji pattern	English	Example
li ser ...	on; on top of	Pirtûk li ser maseyê ye. — The book is on the table.
li bin ...	under; beneath	Pisîk li bin maseyê ye. — The cat is under the table.
li ber ...	in front of; near	Ew li ber derî ye. — She/he is in front of the door.
li paş ...	behind	Ew li paş malê ye. — She/he is behind the house.
li nav ...	inside; among	Ew li nav odeyê ye. — She/he is inside the room.
li kêleka ...	beside; next to	Kursî li kêleka maseyê ye. — The chair is beside the table.
li nêzî ...	near	Dibistan li nêzî malê ye. — The school is near the house.
li dûrî ...	far from	Ew li dûrî bajarê me ye. — It is far from our city.
li hember ...	opposite; facing	Dikan li hember dibistanê ye. — The shop is opposite the school.
li dora ...	around	Zarok li dora maseyê ne. — The children are around the table.
li rex ...	beside; alongside	Ew li rex min e. — She/he is beside me.

5. Common paired and postpositional patterns

Pattern	English	Example
ji ... re	to; for (recipient)	Min ji te re nivîsand. — I wrote to you.
di ... de	in; within; during	Ew di malê de ye. — She/he is in the house.
di ... re	through; along (context-sensitive)	Ew di rê de dimeşe. — She/he walks along the road.
ji ... ve	from; since; from the direction of	Ji duh ve baran dibare. — It has been raining since yesterday.
bi ... re	with; together with	Ez bi te re tîm. — I am coming with you.
ji ... heta ...	from ... to/until ...	Ji duşemê heta înnê. — From Monday to Friday.

6. Oblique case: essential for accurate phrases

Many adpositions take oblique complements. Personal pronouns: ez → min; tu → te; ew → wî (masculine singular) / wê (feminine singular); em → me; hûn → we; ew (plural) → wan. Thus ji min (from me), bi te (with you), ji wî (from him), ji wê (from her), ji wan (from them). Noun forms also depend on gender, number, case and definiteness. The complete paradigm belongs in a dedicated case lesson.

7. English → Kurmanji quick reference

English	Kurmanji	Notes
from home	ji malê	origin
with me	bi min re	accompaniment
without me	bê min	absence
for you	ji bo te / bo te	recipient or benefit; usage varies
to you	ji te re	recipient
on the table	li ser maseyê	surface
under the table	li bin maseyê	lower position
in the house	di malê de	interior
near the house	li nêzî malê	proximity
behind the house	li paş malê	rear position
before class	berî dersê	time
after class	piştî dersê	time
until tomorrow	heta sibê	time limit
since yesterday	ji duh ve	starting point
like a teacher	wek mamosteyekî	similarity
from Monday to Friday	ji duşemê heta înnê	range

8. Direction is not the same as location

Ew li malê ye. — She/he is at home. Ez diçim malê. — I am going home. The second sentence does not simply add li to express English “to.” Verbs, case and construction determine the directional meaning. For motion “into” and “out of,” avoid assuming one fixed English-to-Kurmanji equivalence.

9. Time relations

Berî dersê — before class. Piştî dersê — after class. Di havînê de — in summer. Heta sibê — until tomorrow. Ji duh ve — since yesterday. The expressions differ in form and meaning; do not treat them as a single list of interchangeable prepositions.

10. Place and movement in context

Pirtûk li ser maseyê ye. — The book is on the table. Pisîk li bin maseyê ye. — The cat is under the table. Kursî li kêleka maseyê ye. — The chair is beside the table. Ew li hember dibistanê ye. — She/he is opposite the school.

11. Pronouns and recipients

Compare ji min — from me, bi min re — with me, and ji min re — to/for me. The English prepositions are different because the Kurmanji constructions express different relations. Do not omit re in patterns that require it.

12. Regional and semantic variation

Kurmanji is spoken across regions and varieties. Forms such as bo / ji bo, the scope of li, and some spatial relational expressions can differ. “With” may mean accompaniment (bi ... re) or instrument (bi), so one English word may need different Kurmanji forms. Examples in this lesson are pedagogical and should not be treated as an exhaustive dialectal inventory.

13. Mini dialogue — Axaftin

A: Pirtûk li ku ye? — Where is the book?

B: Pirtûk li ser maseyê ye. — The book is on the table.

A: Pisîk li ku ye? — Where is the cat?

B: Pisîk li bin maseyê ye. — The cat is under the table.

A: Tu bi kê re diçî? — Who are you going with?

B: Ez bi hevalê xwe re diçim. — I am going with my friend.

14. Frequent mistakes — Çewtiyên gelemperî

Do not translate English “in/on/to/with” word for word. Use oblique pronouns after ji and many other adpositions (ji min, not ji ez). Keep the following element in ji ... re or bi ... re. Do not call berî or piştî postpositions when they precede their noun phrase. Check dialect and context before treating near-synonyms as exact equivalents.

15. Exercises — Rahênan

- A. Translate: ji min; bi min re; bê te; ji te re.
- B. Translate: on the table; under the table; near the house; behind the house.
- C. Fill: Pirtûk li ___ maseyê ye. (on)
- D. Choose: ji ez / ji min.
- E. Translate: I go by bus.
- F. Explain the difference between bi and bi ... re.
- G. Translate: from Monday to Friday; after class; since yesterday.
- H. Identify the following element in ji min re and di malê de.
- I. Why is Ez diçim malê not a word-for-word translation of English “to home”?
- J. Write a sentence using li hember or li kêleka.

16. Answer key — Bersiv

A. from me; with me; without you; to/for you.

B. li ser maseyê; li bin maseyê; li nêzî malê; li paş malê.

C. ser. D. ji min. E. Ez bi otobêşê diçim. F. bi may mark means/instrument, while bi ... re often marks accompaniment. G. ji duşemê heta îrê; piştî dersê; ji duh ve. H. re; de. I. Kurmanji may encode direction through the verb and noun form without a direct equivalent of "to." J. Example: Dikan li hember dibistanê ye.

17. References and editorial note — Çavkanî

For further study: W. M. Thackston, Kurmanji Kurdish: A Reference Grammar (2006); descriptive work by Geoffrey Haig and Ergin Öpengin. This is an expanded introductory teaching synthesis, not a verified exhaustive lexicon. Some multiword patterns and examples warrant review by a native-speaking Kurmanji editor before publication, especially across dialects.

18. Next lesson — Dersa pêş

Lesson 15 — Conjunctions (Girêdek): and, but, because, if, when and clause linking.