

Section A: Overall

1. *Microsoft Manual of Style 3*, p. 311:

Do not use *of* after another preposition, for example, "off of" or "outside of." It is colloquial and can be confusing for worldwide readers.

Correct

The taskbar is outside the main window area.

Save your work, and then log off the network.

claims here: (1) *off of* and *outside of* (and other P+*of* combinations, not mentioned in *MMS*) are colloquial; (2) colloquial expressions are confusing for "worldwide readers", presumably because many of them are not speakers of English as a first language and would not have encountered colloquial expressions

and note potential ambiguity in the "correct" ... *and then log off the network* (subsection 6 below)

2. intended advice here: omit *of* WHEN OMISSION IS POSSIBLE (note overgeneralization in the advice)

3. summary

variable Ps: alongside, inside, off, out, outside

[note variation in other cases: except (for)]

plain *out* is extremely restricted in its distribution; in most cases, *of* is required. see **out of** section below

invariably *of*-less: after, before, behind,... [most Ps]

invariably with *of* (cf. other required Ps: apart/aside from, as for, as to, up to, etc.)

ahead of

as of (As of Tuesday, we will no longer accept personal checks)

because of

instead of

irrespective of

outside of 'except for, with the exception of'

upwards of

(for some reason, no one seems to complain about the use of *except for* when plain *except* is possible. well, the reason is probably that no one judges *except for* to be colloquial, so there's no reason to condemn it, even though ONW would in principle apply here. see Bonus Section E below.)

4. that is:

a. only five prepositions show a P+*of* and plain P alternation, and some prepositions require *of*; the *MMS* advice should be applied only to the alternating ones (if even there)

b. for these, there's a separate story for each one: plain *out* is extremely restricted; *outside of* is not colloquial (except in one sense); *off of* is somewhat on the conversational side; etc.; see the separate sections below

CGE (aimed at speakers of English as a second language) doesn't mention *alongside* at all, lists *inside of*, *out of*, and *outside of* as "complex prepositions" without comment (thereby suggesting that they're ok for its readers to use, and that these readers should be prepared to see them in writing), and lists no *of*-variant of *off* (probably because the book was put together by a British team, and *off of* has virtually disappeared in the U.K.).

5. The *of* has a potential function as a clear marker that the construction is prepositional, and (as we'll see below) might also convey a semantic nuance (**Bolinger's dictum**) by highlighting the object.

6. In all five cases, the *of* can serve rhythmic purposes (as MWDEU suggests for *inside of*): when the object begins with a stressed syllable, the *of* prevents a stress clash, and permits alternating stress. In addition, the *of* can prevent ambiguity, especially with *off*, as in the *MMS*'s second example above: intended

log + off the network (with PP)

but also possible

log off + the network (with V Prt),

which would alternate with

log the network off.

more on rhythm: the *-side* prepositions – *inside* and *outside* and *alongside* – have variable stressings. I believe that with *of*, they're almost always stressed on their last syllable, *-side*, which is followed by unstressed *of*. Without *of*, *inside* and *outside* tend (I think) to have whichever stressing would satisfy the Rhythm Rule:

INside China BUT inSIDE the house.

Unless, of course, *inside* and *outside* are contrasted with one another, in which case they have first-syllable stress:

INside and OUTside the house.

Section B: out of

1. obligatory *of*

with numbers: *three out of four*; partitives in general (Out of all the gin joints in the world,...)

with object *here*, *there*: walk out of here/there (special case of the next?)

with container objects: walk out of the house (cf. stare out (of) the window)

transfer verbs: kick/throw/boot/... him out of the house*

?more generally, *of* obligatory when *out of* is parallel to *into*?

extractive *out*: They took the rice out of the stew.

log out: Log out of the system.

(similarly, *log on/in* pretty much require *to*)

idioms: be out of money/time/etc.; be out of one's mind; out of courtesy/pride/etc.; and others etc. etc.

*[Adam Gopnik, "Whitney Balliett", *New Yorker* 2/12/07, p. 31]

... Buddy Rich, instead of keeping time for his band, "pushed it before him, like a man throwing someone out of his house."

and cf. kick/throw/boot/... him off the team/island: *of* OPT, but disfavored by ONW
(similarly: outside, inside,...)

2. instead of listing the cases where *of* is obligatory, turn things around and ask when *of* is omissible.

first stab: *out* + Obj is possible only for 'through a 2-dimensional space' (not 'from a 3-dimensional space', "places or things that can be thought of as containing or surrounding" (MWDEU, p. 702))

motion: go/etc. out the door/window

blood coming out every orifice

caused motion: throw/etc. it out the door/window

vision: look/etc. out the window/porthole/hole in the wall

speech: shout/yell/etc. out the window [some people judge *out of* to be dubious here; thanks to Helen Aristar-Dry]

MWDEU (p.702): A few commentators observe that the *of* is superfluous most of the time, or sometimes—depending on whose opinion you are reading—when *out* is used with verbs of motion. The observation, however, is not especially useful, for *out* and *out of* are interchangeable only in a very few restricted contexts; *out* simply cannot be substituted for *out of* in most cases.

2/13/07 Google webhits:

"out the door" 2,510,000

"out of the door" 837,000

MWDEU: "With *window*, *out of* is about equally common"; indeed:

"out the window" 1,400,000

"out of the window" 1,110,000

Garner 2003 doesn't pronounce on *out of* (or *inside of* or *alongside of*), only on *off of* and *outside of*

Bolinger's dictum again: a fair number of people have suggested to me that *out* + Obj and *out of* + Obj are not entirely synonymous – that, for example, *out of* is *out* plus something: *walk out the door* merely means 'leave a space by walking, using the door', while *walk out of the door* connotes special significance for the door; *walk out the door* then has extended uses that merely mean 'leave' (a marriage, a situation, etc.), a use that is hard to get for *walk out of the door*, which strongly suggests that an actual door is involved and is relevant or important

3. OED draft revision 2004 for the preposition *out* has two non-obsolete senses:

1. From within, away from: = OUT_OF *prep.* 1. Formerly *poet.* Now *regional* and *non-standard*.

[cites from c1300 to 1992]

2. Outside, beyond; = OUT_OF *prep.* 8. Also occas.: beyond the range or limits of; = OUT_OF *prep.* 11. Now *non-standard*.

[cites from c1375 to 1991]

The OED's first sense mixes the 2-d and 3-d cases (this should be revised); many of the cites (including all those from the 20th century) would be ok by the principle above (and plain *out* sounds ok to me):

1616 SHAKESPEARE *Coriol.* (1623) V. ii. 41 When you haue pusht out your gates the very Defender of them.

1926 A. G. MCADIE *Man & Weather* 19 The ship would make easier weather by proceeding out the western entrance.

1958 *Otago Daily Times* 24 Feb. 5/2 He flew out the side of the cloud to warmer air.

1972 D. E. WESTLAKE *Cops & Robbers* (1973) iii. 46 He looked out the windshield.

1982 A. MAUPIN *Further Tales of City* 59 The houseman wolfed down a deviled egg and scurried out the door.

1992 *Globe & Mail* (Toronto) 6 Aug. (Educ. Suppl.) 2/2 When you become useless, you're out the door.

The cites for the second sense all require *outside* rather than *out* in modern standard English: e.g.

1883 W. D. HOWELLS *Woman's Reason* (Tauchn. 1884) I. 240 Its history..could not be known out the family.

1977 J. P. DONLEAVY *Destinies of Darcy Dancer, Gentleman* (1990) xv. 216 A thrush chirping in evening song in the first darkness just out the window.

Section C: *outside of*

1. MWDEU pp. 702-3:

Bernstein 1965 sees nothing wrong with *outside of* as a synonym for *outside*, but a whole string of commentators from Bierce 1909 to Shaw 1987 do see something wrong. The culprit is *of*, all two letters and one syllable of it. Our evidence suggests that writers and speakers retain the *of* when it sounds right to them, and drop it when it does not. [quotes from Faulkner (in his own voice), Safire, Leacock, Oliver North (in *The Tower Commission Report*), James Sledd, etc.]

Garner 2003:582 just says “*outside of* is inferior to *outside*”; and deprecates *outside of* in the sense *apart from* or *aside from*, which he recommends instead

2. OED draft revision Dec. 2004 for the preposition *outside*, in general uses:

1. Of position. **a.** On the outside or outer side of; external to. [cites from 1795 to 1988]

b. Beyond the bounds or limits of (an action, sphere, etc.). [cites from 1870 to 1988]

2. Of motion or direction: to or towards the outer side of; to the outside or exterior of; beyond (the bounds or limits of). [cites from 1798 to 1994]

3. Apart from, besides, except. [cites from 1868 and 1943; I’d require *outside of* in both]

1868 E. YATES *Rock Ahead* I. ii, Outside them two, and the Squire in his grave..nobody..knows the rights of the story.

1943 G. GREENE *Ministry of Fear* I. iii. 44 It was almost as if she not only disapproved of him, but had disowned him, wouldn’t co-operate in anything--outside the woollies.

3. The OED treats *outside of* as a phrase involving the adverb *outside* (though it compares it to the preposition *out of*)

4. *outside of*. (Cf. OUT_OF *prep.*). **a.** Beyond the walls, limits, or bounds of; to or on the outside of; external to. [cites from 1784 to 1975, all (except for one with the idiom *outside of a horse* ‘on horseback’) with *outside of* replaceable by *outside*. But note: *outside of* is not labeled colloq.]

b. *colloq.* (orig. *U.S.*). Apart from, with the exception of. [cites from 1847 to 1991]

4. The OED treats the adverb *outside* as a shortening of *on/to the outside* (with ‘on the outside’ cites from 1813 to 2001, and ‘to the outside’ cites from 1837 to 1991). Note that the OED’s attestations for *outside of* begin before these.

5. The noun *outside* is attested from 1457 on.

6. NYT search 2/15/07 for “outside of” in the past 30 days gets 78 hits, 4 of which have the N *outside* (*the outside of*). Of the remaining 74, 9 – surprisingly many – are exceptive. That leaves 65 exx that could alternate. Only a few of these 65 are in quoted speech, and they’re almost all in straightforward reportage in serious contexts. I conclude that the claim that *outside of* is colloquial is not supported; cf. *off of*, where the corresponding number is small (7), more than half (4) in quoted speech, and all of them easy-going in tone.

typical *outside of* exx:

Eager for outsourcing, Russia battles image problem

... one 120 kilometers outside of Moscow at Dubna. Nevertheless ...
February 15, 2007 - Andy McCue, for Silicon.com (CNet)

SQUARE FEET; It’s Also the Texas Capital of Construction

... its first project outside of the Southeast and eventually plans ...
February 14, 2007 - By KRISTINA SHEVORY (NYT)

(lots of geographical ones)

Claiming Outsider Status, Romney Says He’ll Seek White House

... experience from years outside of government — he ran the 2002 ...
February 14, 2007 - By ADAM NAGOURNEY (NYT)

Army Is Going Wrinkle-Free; Velcro, Not Creases, Is the Norm

Though there was no official requirement to have the old uniforms professionally cleaned and pressed, Army culture outside of combat situations has often been to do so.
February 7, 2007 - By WILLIAM YARDLEY (NYT)

Bush's and Spitzer's Budgets Hit New York Hospitals Hard

“Paying for G.M.E. is outside of Medicaid's primary purpose, ...
February 6, 2007 - By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA (NYT)
(quoted, but from the administration’s budget summary)

an exceptive example:

SKIING; Rules Prompt Have-Nots to Say They’ve Had Enough

... largest ski race outside of the Winter Olympics. That ...
February 12, 2007 - By NATHANIEL VINTON (NYT)

7. **Bolinger's dictum** again: is *outside of* really *outside* plus something?
8. comparing exceptive *outside of* to *apart from* and *aside from*:

NYT searches 2/15/07 over past 30 days:

outside of: 9

apart from: 35 (excluding things like *set apart from*)

aside from: 38 (excluding *stepped aside from*)

(fair number of easy-going pieces in all three sets)

Section D: off of

1. Google web search 2/12/07:

“off of them” 611,000

“off them” 1,100,000

(but some spurious – e.g. the verb *off*)

(also, a lot of “on (X) and off them”; “and off them” gets 12,300 hits)

2. *off of* disparaged in almost all handbooks – a small sample of recent examples:

- a. Garner 2003:569 just says “*off of* is much inferior to *off* without the preposition”

- b. Cook & Martin 2004:179:

(off of) The *of* is unnecessary. Omit *of* in: **He fell off (of) the bed.**

[no entries for *out of*, *outside of*, *inside of*, *alongside of*]

- c. Davidson 2006:390

***of* is not always welcome**

... Also unwelcome in formal communication is *of* in the popular phrase *off of*—as in “the vase fell off *of* the table.”

3. history and usage: MWDEU notes, “off of” has been around since the 16th century, and apparently didn't start collecting opprobrium until Ayres 1881. MWDEU judges it to be “primarily a form used in speech”, but some of their cites are from elevated written contexts, and some kinds of examples seem entirely natural to me (especially with concrete direct objects: “He took the plates off the table” is slightly awkward, perhaps over-formal, for me, while “He took the plates off of the table” sounds just right -- no doubt others will have other tastes). note possible **Bolinger's dictum** analysis here

4. *off of*: NYT search 2/12/07 for past 30 days suggests that *off of* does indeed tend towards the colloquial

7 relevant hits (disregarding things like “the cutting off of funding”), 4 of them in quoted speech, all of them easy-going in tone

1. Will Duke Just Be a Bubble Team?

'When you're coming off of losses, at times that becomes more difficult.'

(quote from Duke basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski)

February 12, 2007 - By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS (AP)

2. First Chapter

Maravich

“One of the fellows who played on my high school team fell off of a platform and into a vat of molten steel.”

(quote from Dr. Michael Zernich)

February 11, 2007 - By WAYNE FEDERMAN and MARSHALL TERRILL

3. Week in videos: Security, the law and outlaws

Want to see what cybercriminals are up to and what the latest trends are in malicious software? CNET News.com's Joris Evers looked at what they're doing to run code off of Web sites, how the threat appears to the user, and what you can do about it.

February 10, 2007 - CNET News.com Staff, for News.com (CNet)

4. Spitzer Seeks Panel to Study Prison Closings

“Just coming off of a rather arduous Berger Commission experience, I think the Legislature will look a little skeptically at whether or not this is the way to go.”

(quote from NY State Senator George H. Winner Jr.)

February 5, 2007 - By NICHOLAS CONFESSORE (NYT)

5. Spotlight: N.B.A.; All-Star Also-Rans Hoping for a Reprieve

"You have a near-perfect player in Josh Howard on a near-perfect team and you only get one All-Star off of that? I just don't understand."

(quote from ESPN analyst Bill Walton)

February 4, 2007 - By LIZ ROBBINS (NYT)

6. FAIR GAME; The C.E.O.'s Parachute Cost What?

Will more companies follow Sara Lee's example and stop billing shareholders for excise taxes altogether? Don't count on it. Because gross-ups are so prevalent, it will take unusually assertive directors to wean executives off of them.

February 4, 2007 - By GRETCHEN MORGENSON

7. The Modern Kennel Conundrum

Small dogs are increasingly being litter-trained. Minefields of mildly electrified mats keep curious ones off of furniture.

February 4, 2007 - By Jon Mooallem – Magazine

Bonus Section E: *except for*

1. see UsingEnglish.com for test on *except* vs. *except for*

2. *CGE*, sec. 39 discussion:

with “generalizing words” (*all, everything, everyone, no, anybody, whole, etc.*), either variant is acceptable;

otherwise, use plain *except*.

.....

In the UsingEnglish.com materials, the “generalizing words” examples are the following:

I did everything *except* (for) the last exercise.

Everyone was there *except* (for) Fumiko.

They have no one to blame for the trouble *except* (for) themselves.

I can’t remember anything *except* (for) the pain after the operation.

In the UsingEnglish.com materials, the otherwise case includes object VPs, where *for* is just ungrammatical (for base-form objects: *They do nothing except (*for) complain all the time* – but see below) or strongly dispreferred (for infinitival objects: *I have no answer to the criticism, except (??for) to blame the short-sighted management*), and object PPs and *wh*-clauses, where it seems to me *for* is possible, though plain *except* is preferable (*The weather was awful except (??for) in the south; He’s not very friendly except (??for) when he wants something*). *For* is strongly dispreferred with object *that*- or zero-marked clauses (not illustrated in EnglishUsage.com: *He’s entirely rational, except (??for) (that) he thinks the earth is flat*; *CGE* wants the *that* in this case).

As you can see from the above, the conditions for non-NP objects override the “generalizing words” clause,

But UsingEnglish.com also has two cases where it REQUIRES *for*. One involves a misunderstanding about the structures in question:

New lightweight materials have replaced traditional ones *except for* certain uses.

Here the object of *except* is actually the PP *for certain uses*; the *for* belongs with what follows, not with *except* (cf. *except in certain uses*). So we get plain *except*, although *except for for certain uses* would be just marginally possible (depending on how you feel about *except for* with PP objects).

The other one is different:

There was complete silence *except for* the sound of someone coughing.

Here the exceptive expression is a sentence adverbial, rather than a modifier within the sentence, and the *for* is obligatory. When the exceptive phrase is sentence-initial, it must be a sentence adverbial, and the *for* is obligatory (in my judgment):

Except *(for) the last exercise, I did everything.
Except *(for) Fumiko, everyone was there.
Except *(for) Bob, there was no one there.
Except *(for) the pain after the operation, I can't remember anything.
Here the exceptives are out of the scope of quantifiers.

To sum up:

with object base-form VPs, only *except* is possible;

with object complement clauses and infinitival VPs, *except* is very strongly preferred.

with object PPs and (certain) wh-clauses, *except* is preferred;

with object NPs in sentence adverbials, only *except for* is possible;

otherwise, object NPs in exceptives will be in the scope of a quantifier, and either variant is possible.

3. *except for* with PPs (lots and lots of examples) (2/10/07):

Next to each citation you create in NoodleBib MLA (**except for in** the Starter version), you'll find a link titled ...

www.noodletools.com/kb/atom.php?category=2

Publicly post images that show to the naked eye, male and female genitalia, along with female nipples, **except for in** designated Adult Verified Rooms.

www.gatewayoracle.net/aup.html

As a regulatory challenge, this is much like the Internet rules: there is no clear partisan advantage--no disadvantage, really, **except for to** politicians ...

www.moresoftmoneyhardlaw.com/news.html?AID=798

other transport specifically connected with the case plan (**except for to** and from medical appointments for Medicaid-eligible children, which is covered by ...

www.dcf.state.vt.us/fsd/policy/268.html

It helps to find better players, but it should be random (**except for with** friends). It does the beginners good to battle the masters.

boards.thewiire.com/lofiversion/index.php?t17977.html

Why is it that I have never in my life maintained a friendship **except for with** my husband. I never get invited to anything.

www.crm.mb.ca/granny/148.htm

4. even *except for for* (2/10/07):

Except for for prescription and over-the-counter medicines, baby formula and breast milk, and other essential liquids, gels, and aerosols, the following ...

www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/children/index.shtm

The mixtures were built by adding new components to a previous mixture, **except for for** the nine-component mixture, which was provided by Kimmen Sjölander.

www.cse.ucsc.edu/~karplus/regular-ismb-95/node5.html

It was done that way for 214 years **except for for** more than 60 nominees whose names Clinton sent to the Senate between 1995 and 2000.

www.politicalgateway.com/main/columns/read.html?col=350

For the purposes set out under point 7, data shall not as a rule be shared **except for for** communications to agents or representatives of the undersigned who ...

www.emmegigroup.com/Sezione.jsp?idSezione=223&idSezioneRif=222

5. *except for* with interrogative wh-clause objects (huge number of examples) (2/10/07):

Bush is anti-Shi'ite **except for when** he's pro-Hakim and SCIRI but he's also ... Bush is also against Shi'ites when they're Syrian **except for when** he sends ...

www2.boomantribune.com/story/2007/1/16/12944/9569

Viruses are fun **except for when** they kill you.

www.mste.uiuc.edu/courses/ci303fa01/students/elord/virus.ppt

All tests passed **except for where** known ON bugs exist.

www.opensolaris.org/.../downloads/build_49_release_notes/;jsessionid=360B0C8E82AC0BF15F687E83EB99BDBB

Except for where adjoining property is developed or pavement remains in place, percentages are to be applied as listed, not adjusted, so that we will be ...

www.dot.state.il.us/landacq/lamanual/Chapter%202/LA%2020213.doc

And know it all **except for how** to spell or be grammatical. Chorus: He comes in every stripe, from the conservative to radical ...

www.poppyfields.net/filks/00310.html

And the Help files talk all about it **except for how** to access it.

forums.support.roxio.com/lofiversion/index.php/t8790.html

free-relative wh-clauses act like ordinary NPs, and in sentence adverbials will require *for*:

Except for what happened on 9/11 this is much like Iran-Contra all over ...

www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=show_mesg&forum=102&topic_id=655980&mesg...

We're just like you (we want to be married and have children and we work hard and have mortgages) **except for what** we do in bed. So don't kill us.
www.whitecranejournal.com/50/art5005.asp

i don't know what happened that night **except for what** i read in the paper ...
www.topix.net/forum/source/palo-alto-daily-news/T8GC4MGCVDN2DJEEA

6. *except for* with infinitival VPs (!) (2/10/07):

During gameplay you have no options, **except for to** pause and end the game.
www.pdarcade.com/modules.php?name=Reviews&file=printout&id=134

Nothing else really happens with the form in the processActionForm(), **except for to** store it into the proper scope.
issues.us.apache.org/struts/browse/STR-552

Such trials might be misleading, **except for to** reject inactive agents that have too little promise to undergo further testing.
linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0140673605719668

7. *except for* with complement-clause objects (!) (2/10/07):

that-marked:

I probably wouldn't have noticed it **except for that I** live in Ohio just south of Michigan and just west of Lake Erie.
douweosinga.com/projects/visitedstates

Pretty much nothing **except for that I'm** fascinated by both subjects.
www.housing.wisc.edu/Student_Orgs/bradley/staff/office_staff.html

I don't even feel that bad **except for that I** can't sleep because of the barking cough, and my throat is an angry tube of despair. But I am so gross.
ohforfun.typepad.com/oh_for_fun/

zero-marked:

I'm all ready for the trip, **except for I** haven't called my parents to let them know I'm going.
forum.wordreference.com/archive/index.php/t-36293.htm

Anyway, I figured no one would mind since this thread seems to be pretty random anyway, **except for I** have some vague idea that we are insulting Anton.
www.dtownstomp.com/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=4

I'd go into some of the (fascinating) reasons why this works so well, **except for I'm** trying to convince some of these guys to start blogging, ...

www.tbray.org/ongoing/When/200x/2004/03/26/OpenOffice

8. a few examples of *except for* plus base-form VPs (!) (2/10/07):

... o yes we both start getting grumpy and we don't want to do anything **except for complain**.

www.farfaraway.blogspot.com/

What have I done **except for tell** the truth and be honest?

www.erichufschmid.net/SamDanner8Aug2006.html

... he didnt do **anything except for move** out and stop talking to us.

profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=39710118

well i havent really done **anything except for go** to school...yea its been really boring.

www.xanga.com/amandadawn_16

9. references:

Chiu-Ming, Li & Hsi Ching-Hua. 1981. 'Except' or 'except for'? ELT Journal 35.3.260-3.