PREPOSITIONS OF POSITION, PLACE AND MOVEMENT: IMPORTANT BASIC NOTES

Adapted from:

1. AT, IN
   - What’s the difference between?
     They met at the cinema. (Place; probably outside).
     They met in the cinema. (Inside).
     It was cold in the library (= inside the building).
     We were at the library (= using the library, i.e., the normal purpose of the building).
     We went to a concert at the Auditorio.
     It was very hot in that theatre.

   In: the “inside” of places.
   At: the purpose of places.

2. AT, TO
   - What’s the difference between?
     We went to the cinema.
     We arrived at the cinema.

   At: not used with verbs of motion

   - We travel FROM our starting point TO our destination
   - We travel BY bus/car/bicycle/motorcycle/train/boat/sea/plane/air
   - We travel ON foot/a bicycle/a bus/a motorcycle/a horse/a train/a ship/a plane.
   - We travel IN a car/a taxi.
   - We arrive IN a country or town.
   - We arrive IN/AT a village.
   - We arrive AT other destinations: address, hotel, station, bus-stop, meeting point…

3. IN, ON, INTO, ONTO

3.1. TRAVEL
   - We get...
     IN/ INTO a public or private vehicle (enter it)
     ON/ ONTO a public vehicle, a horse (mount)
     OUT OF a public or private vehicle (alight)
     OFF a public vehicle, a horse (alight or dismount)

   - What are the correct options here?:
     Peter came running into/to the room and threw his books at/onto the floor.

3.2. POSITION AND MOVEMENT

   - What’s the difference between?:
     Position.
     We were sitting in the café.
     She stood on the balcony.
     Movement.
     We went into the café.
     She walked onto the balcony.
● OTHER REMARKS ABOUT PREPOSITIONS:

Above/over the door there was a sign saying, ‘Mind your head’.
She put a quilt over the bed (very close or touching).

- Across is related to on (it suggests that the movement is on a flat surface).
- Through is related to in (you move through a three-dimensional space).

Compare:
I walked across the square to the cafe.
I pushed through the crowds to the bar.