

Prepositions cannot normally be followed by conjunctions. Of course, this is possible in a few cases, but prepositions are normally dropped before that-clauses. This usually happens after words referring to saying, writing, thinking etc.

Compare:

I knew about his illness. (Here the preposition about is followed by a noun.)

I knew that he was ill. (NOT I knew about that he was ill.)

I heard about his problems.

I heard that he was facing some problems.

I had no idea of his state of mind.

I had no idea that he was depressed.

I was not aware of his presence in the room. (Here the preposition of is followed by the noun his presence.)

I was not aware that he was present in the room. (NOT I was not aware of that he ...)

In cases where the preposition cannot be dropped before that, we add the phrase 'the fact'.

I managed to arrive in time for the meeting in spite of the fact that the train was late.

(NOT I managed to arrive in time for the meeting in spite of that ...) (NOT I managed to arrive in time in spite that ...)

She paid no attention to the fact that I had the necessary qualifications. (NOT She paid no attention that I had the necessary qualifications.)

They went out despite the fact that it was raining. (NOT They went out despite that it was raining.)