

Grammar Lesson 25—PREPOSITIONS WITH THE INFINITIVE

The verb form generally used after a preposition is the infinitive. However, the present participle is used after **en**, and the past infinitive after **après**. (See Verb Lesson 17.)

pour vivre	} in order to live
afin de vivre	
avant de partir, before leaving	
sans pleurer, without crying	
<i>But:</i>	
en mangeant, while eating	
en étudiant, by studying	
en arrivant, on arriving	
après avoir fini, after finishing	
après être tombé(-e, -s, -es), after falling	

Some verbs require **à** before an infinitive.

aider à, to help	commencer à, to begin
aimer (à), to like	continuer à, to continue
s'amuser à, to enjoy, have a good time	inviter à, to invite
apprendre à, to learn	réussir à, to succeed in
avoir à, to have to	

Nous **apprenons à** parler français.

We are learning to speak French.

Commencez à étudier.

Begin studying.

Elle a **réussi à** le faire.

She succeeded in doing it.

Note: The **à** is often omitted with **aimer**.

Il **aime** (à) danser.

He likes to dance.

Some verbs require **de** before an infinitive.

cesser de, to stop
décider de, to decide
demander (à quelqu'un) de, to ask (someone) to
dire (à quelqu'un) de, to tell (someone) to
essayer de, to try
finir de, to finish
oublier de, to forget
venir de, to have just

Il a **cessé de** pleuvoir.

It has stopped raining.

Je lui ai **dit d'y** rester.

I told him to stay there.

Ils ont **fini de** causer.

They finished talking.

Elle **vient d'**arriver.

She has just arrived.

Some verbs are followed directly by the infinitive, without a preposition.

aimer mieux } préférer } to prefer	entendre, to hear espérer, to hope laisser, to let, allow pouvoir, to be able savoir, to know how venir, to come voir, to see
aller, to go désirer } vouloir } to wish, want	
devoir, to have to, be (supposed) to	
il faut, it is necessary, must il vaut mieux, it is better	

Ils *doivent* prendre le train.

Savez-vous nager?

Je l'ai *vu* manger.

Il vaut mieux boire du lait.

They have (are) to take the train.

Do you know how to swim?

I saw him eating.

It is better to drink milk.

Most adjectives and nouns require *de* before an infinitive.

content de, glad to, pleased to enchanté de, delighted to heureux de, happy to sûr de, sure to (of)	le besoin de, the need to l'intention de, the intention of la peur de, the fear of le temps de, the time to
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Je suis enchanté de faire votre connaissance.
adjective

Elle sera heureuse de chanter.
adjective

A-t-il le temps d'étudier?
noun

Nous avons peur de patiner.
noun

I'm delighted to meet you.

She will be happy to sing.

Has he the time to study?

We are afraid to skate.

An infinitive that is passive in meaning is preceded by *à*.

Je n'ai rien *à faire*.

Ce livre est facile *à lire*.

Voilà une maison *à vendre*.

Y a-t-il quelque chose *à dire*?

Ce gâteau est bon *à manger*.

I have nothing to do (= to be done).

This book is easy to read (= to be read).

There is a house for sale (= to be sold).

Is there anything to say (= to be said)?

This cake is good to eat (= to be eaten).

An impersonal expression composed of *il + être + adjective* requires *de* before the infinitive. In this case, the infinitive is really the subject.

Il est bon de voyager.

Il est utile de savoir l'anglais.

It is good to travel. (= To travel is good.)

It is useful to know English. (= To know English is useful.)

Note

1. Notice the difference in the use of the prepositions in the French sentences.

Il est facile *de* comprendre le français.

impersonal

It is easy to understand French. (impersonal)

Le français est facile *à* comprendre.

passive

French is easy to understand. (passive)

2. French makes clear the meaning of *il* by two distinct constructions. However, the translations of these sentences into English, although identical, have two different meanings.

Il est facile d'étudier.

C'est facile à étudier.

It is easy to study. (= Studying is easy.)

It is easy to study. (= The book, The lesson, etc. is easily studied.)

Memorize:

Il est bon de

C'est bon à