

1. à + infinitive
2. de + infinitive
3. pour, afin de, avant de, sans, par + infinitive
4. après (past infinitive constructions)

The infinitive is the verb form generally used after a preposition in French. **À** (to) and **de** (from, about) are the most common prepositions in French. In many expressions, the choice of the preposition **à** or **de** before an infinitive is purely idiomatic; that is, it is unrelated to meaning. In such cases, one must memorize which preposition is used.

à + infinitive

When the following verbs are followed by an infinitive, the preposition **à** is required.



Tex **a du mal à** trouver l'inspiration.

Tex finds it difficult to find inspiration.

aider à, to help to

s'amuser à, to have fun at

apprendre à, to learn to

arriver à, to succeed in, to manage to

s'attendre à, to expect to

avoir du mal à, to find it difficult to

chercher à, to try to, to attempt to

commencer à, to start to

continuer à/de, to continue to
(either **à** or **de**)

se décider à, to make up one's mind to

encourager à, to encourage to

s'habituer à, to get used to

hésiter à, to hesitate to

inviter à, to invite to

se mettre à, to start to

se préparer à, to prepare to

renoncer à, to give up

réussir à, to succeed at

servir à, to be used for

tenir à, to be anxious to, to be eager to

de + infinitive

When the following verbs are followed by an infinitive, the preposition **de** is required.



Tex **arrête d'**écrire, parce qu'il **rêve d'**embrasser Tammy.

Tex stops writing, because he is dreaming of kissing Tammy.

(s')arrêter de, to stop

choisir de, to choose to

conseiller de, to advise to

se contenter de, to content oneself with

continuer à/de, to continue to
(either **à** or **de**)

décider de, to decide to

s'efforcer de to try hard to, to endeavor to

essayer de, to try to

s'excuser de, to apologize for

finir de, to finish

oublier de, to forget to

permettre (à quelqu'un) **de**,
to permit someone to

persuader de, to persuade to

se presser de, to hurry to

promettre de, to promise to

proposer de, to propose to

refuser de, to refuse to


rêver de to dream of

se soucier de, to care about

se souvenir de, to remember to

mériter de, to deserve, to be worth

Most idiomatic expressions with **avoir** also require **de** + infinitive:

| | |
|--|--|
|  Oh, Tex a l'air de rêver. | Oh, Tex seems to be dreaming. |
| Tex a peur de se réveiller. | Tex is afraid of waking up. |
| Tex a envie de dormir. | Tex feels like sleeping. |
| Tex a besoin de se reposer. | Tex needs to rest. |
| Tex a honte d' être américain. | Tex is ashamed of being American. |
| Tex a tort d' être susceptible. | Tex is wrong in being touchy / should not be touchy. |
| Tex a raison d' être fier. | Tex is right to be proud. |



The infinitive may be used to complete the sense of an adjective or a pronoun. Generally infinitives following a noun or adjective are preceded by the preposition **de**. (Tex est **content de** voir Tammy dans ses rêves érotiques. Tex is glad to see Tammy in his erotic dreams.)


However, adjectives and nouns are followed by the preposition **à** + infinitive to indicate a passive sense or a function: "cette eau est **bonne à** boire" (this is drinking water), "ce livre est **amusant à** lire" (this book is fun to read), "c'est **triste à** voir" (it's a sorry sight), "c'est **difficile à** dire" (this is difficult to say).

pour, afin de, avant de, sans, par + infinitive

The infinitive expresses purpose when it is used after **pour** or **afin de** (in order to).

In the case of **avant de** (before) and **sans** (without), the English translation is often a conjugated verb (before they left), or a present participle (without speaking), rather than the English infinitive.

The infinitive follows the preposition **par** (by) after the verbs **commencer** (to start) and **finir** (to finish).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  pour/afin de | Tex s'allonge sur son lit pour lire. | Tex lies down on his bed to read. |
| avant de | Avant de s'endormir, Tex lit toujours un poème érotique. | Before going to sleep, Tex always reads an erotic poem. |
| sans | Il ne peut pas dormir sans rêver de Tammy. | He can not sleep without dreaming of Tammy. |
| par | Il finit par rêver de Tammy toute la nuit. | He ends up dreaming of Tammy all night long. |





après (past infinitive constructions)

The infinitive of **avoir** or **être** plus the **past participle** of a verb is used after the preposition **après** (after) to describe a preceding action in the past. Note the past participle agreement in past constructions with **être**.



Après avoir rêvé de Tammy, Tex retrouve son inspiration.

After dreaming of Tammy, Tex finds his inspiration again.

Après être devenue la muse de Tex, Tammy est passée à la postérité!

After becoming Tex' muse, Tammy is immortalized!



exercices

fill in the blanks

Fill in the blank with the proper preposition: à or de (d').

1. Tex se met _____ travailler tous les soirs à 7 heures.
2. Tex et Tammy s'amuse(n)t _____ écouter de la musique cadienne.
3. Tex aide ses étudiants _____ apprendre le français.
4. Tammy invite ses amis _____ dîner chez elle.
5. Tex encourage ses étudiants _____ parler français.
6. Edouard a du mal _____ comprendre les habitudes culinaires des Américains.
7. Tex promet _____ rendre visite à Paw-Paw.
8. Bette essaie _____ draguer Tex.
9. Edouard refuse _____ manger des hamburgers.
10. Tex a honte _____ être américain.
11. Edouard propose à ses amis _____ dîner au restaurant français.
12. Joe-Bob oublie toujours _____ étudier.