

Faculty of letters and languages

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Module: English

EXPRESSING PURPOSE

(to, in order to, so as to, so that)

How to express purpose ?

Expressing purpose is a way to convey the **reason** or **intention** behind an action or statement. By expressing our purposes, we can provide context for our actions and help others to understand why we are doing something.

Example:

Jim is studying English . He wants to get a better job.

What is his purpose?

What is his aim?

What is his intention?

What is his goal?

→ To get a better job.

Jim is studying English . (He wants) to get a better job.

We can say the same thing in many ways:

- Jim is studying English **in order to** get a better job.
- Jim is studying English **to** get a better job.
- Jim is studying English **so as to** get a better job.
- Jim is studying English **so that** he can get a better job.

Expressing purpose in English is not too much asked for; the basic tools you need to do it are no more than these: **to, in order to, so as to** and **so that**.

1. Affirmative form:

We use **in order to**, **so as to**, and **to** to express purpose in the affirmative form.

Examples:

I am exercising every day **to** improve my health.

I am taking this course **in order to** improve my writing skills.

I talked to him **so as to** have a better understanding of the situation.

2. Negative form:

We use **in order not to** and **so as not to** to express purpose in the negative form.

Examples:

He got up very quietly **so as not to** wake the children.

I drank coffee **in order not to** fall asleep.

3. Purpose with so that:

You can also express purpose with **so that**. In this case you generally need to use a modal.

Examples:

I'm putting the dish in the oven now **so that** it will be ready by eight o'clock.

I've finished the report **so that** you may read it.

I am saving money **so that** I can go on vacation.

Reminder:

Do not confuse the preposition 'to' with the infinitive marker 'to'. While both are followed by the base form of the verb, the preposition 'to' that is used to express purpose forms a prepositional phrase that acts as an adverb of purpose. Also, it can be replaced with other prepositions and follow 'in order' or 'so as' to express purpose. One way to distinguish between the infinitive marker 'to' and the preposition 'to' is to check if you can change the place of clauses in the sentence.

Example:

I am going **to** work out today. → “to” infinitive **you can't say: 'To work out today I am going.'**

I work out every day **to** stay fit → preposition of purpose **You can also say: 'To stay fit, I work out every day'**