

FRENCH VERBS

VERB + DIRECT OBJECT

VERB + À + INFINITIVE



Understanding the Use of "À" with French Verbs: Why Some Verbs Require It Before an Infinitive but Not Before a Direct Object

In French, prepositions can be confusing, especially when it comes to verbs that require the preposition à.

Certain verbs, like aider, encourager, and forcer, need à when followed by an infinitive verb. However, when these same verbs are used with a direct object, à disappears altogether.

Why Does French Need the Preposition "À" with Some Verbs?

In many cases, French requires à to connect certain verbs with their following infinitives, even though English might not use any preposition at all in similar sentences.

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For example, the verb *aider* means "to help," and while we say "I help my son to do his homework" in English, French requires the structure *J'aide mon fils à faire ses devoirs* — "I help my son do his homework," with *à* before the infinitive *faire*.

The Fine Line Between Infinitives and Direct Objects

The challenge lies in recognizing when the verb is followed by an infinitive or a direct object, because the presence or absence of *à* depends on this distinction.

If the verb is acting on a direct object, no preposition is needed. But if the verb governs an action (the infinitive), *à* comes into play.

Understanding the function of each verb and how it's used will help you navigate this common but confusing part of French grammar. In this lesson, we'll look at a list of common verbs, and we'll see examples using them with both direct objects and infinitives.

In the examples below, remember that in composed past tenses (like the *passé composé*), the [past participle must agree](#) with a preceding direct object or direct object pronoun.

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Verb	French	English
Aider	<i>J'aide <u>mon fils</u> à <u>faire</u> ses devoirs.</i>	I help my son do his homework.
Encourager	<i>J'encourage <u>mon frère</u> à <u>apprendre</u> le français.</i>	I encourage my brother to learn French.
Forcer	<i>On <u>m'a forcé(e)</u> à <u>partir</u> tôt.</i>	They forced me to leave early. *Note: "On" is translated as the "anonymous they" in this sentence.
Obliger	<i>Il oblige <u>les enfants</u> à <u>manger</u> des légumes.</i>	He forces the children to eat vegetables.
Habituer	<i>Je <u>l'ai habitué(e)</u> à se lever tôt.</i>	I got him used to waking up early.
Préparer	<i>Je prépare <u>mes élèves</u> à <u>passer</u> l'examen.</i>	I prepare my students to take the exam.
Condamner	<i>Le juge <u>l'a condamné(e)</u> à <u>payer</u> une amende.</i>	The judge sentenced him to pay a fine.

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Engager	<i>Ils <u>m'ont engagé(e) à travailler avec eux.</u></i>	They hired me to work with them.
Pousser	<i>Elle <u>l'a poussé(e) à dire la vérité.</u></i>	She pushed him to tell the truth.
Réduire	<i>La crise <u>l'a réduit(e) à mendier.</u></i>	The crisis reduced him to begging.
Inciter	<i>Le professeur <u>incite ses élèves à lire davantage.</u></i>	The teacher encourages his students to read more.
Contraindre	<i>Les circonstances <u>l'ont contraint(e) à accepter l'offre.</u></i>	Circumstances forced him to accept the offer.
Déterminer	<i>Cet échec <u>l'a déterminé(e) à travailler plus dur.</u></i>	This failure made him determined to work harder.
Exhorter	<i>Le coach a <u>exhorté son équipe à faire de leur mieux.</u></i>	The coach urged his team to do their best.
Conduire	<i>Sa passion <u>l'a conduit(e) à devenir musicien.</u></i>	His passion led him to become a musician.

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Désigner	<i>Ils l'ont désigné(e) à <u>représenter</u> l'entreprise.</i>	They appointed him to represent the company.
Prédisposer	<i>Son éducation l'a prédisposé(e) à <u>aimer</u> la littérature.</i>	His education predisposed him to love literature.
Résigner	<i>On l'a résigné(e) à <u>accepter</u> son sort.</i>	They resigned him to accept his fate. *Note: "On" is translated as the "anonymous they" in this sentence.
Accoutumer	<i>Il a accoutumé <u>son</u> <u>chien</u> à <u>dormir</u> dehors.</i>	He got his dog used to sleeping outside.

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