A2 grammar

Purpose with to and for

Say why you do something and what things are used for.

Lesson + practice



What does purpose mean?

Purpose answers this question:

Why do you do it?

What do you need it for?

We use two common patterns.

ACTION / GOAL

to + base verb

THING / REASON

for + noun

Example: I went to the shop to buy milk.

The purpose of going to the shop is buying milk.

to + base verb

Use this pattern to say why someone does an action.

subject + verb + to + base verb

I study hard to pass the exam.

We called the restaurant to book a table.

She saved money to buy a new phone.

Base verb

pass **book** **buy**

No -ing here.

for + noun

Use this pattern to say what you need or want.

subject + verb + for + noun

Let’s go to the café for a coffee.

I need some money for a taxi.

They went to the park for a walk.

Noun phrases

a coffee **a taxi** **a walk**

A thing or activity name

Same situation, two ways to say it

Both sentences express a purpose. The grammar changes with the word that follows.

ACTION

I went to the shop to buy milk.

to + buy

THING

I went to the shop for some milk.

for + milk

After to: a verb | After for: a noun

for + -ing: an object’s function

Use for + -ing to explain what an object is used for.

OBJECT

This machine is used for cleaning cars.

OBJECT

A thermometer is for measuring temperature.

You can also use to + base verb:

This machine is used to clean cars.

A thermometer is used to measure temperature.

Use for + -ing for the function of a thing, not for the reason a person acts.

A common mistake

A person’s reason needs to + base verb.

I work hard for improving my English.

I work hard to improve my English.

Why? A person works hard to achieve a goal.

A machine, tool or object can have a function: This app is for learning vocabulary.

Quick choice

Practice 1

Complete each sentence with to or for.

1 I need my laptop ___ send an email.

2 We have time ___ a quick coffee.

3 She called ___ an appointment.

4 They are saving money ___ travel.

5 I need a bag ___ my books.

6 Where can I go ___ buy stamps?

Work alone for two minutes. Then compare with a partner.

Transform the sentences

Practice 2

Rewrite each sentence using the word in brackets. Keep the meaning.

1. I went to the supermarket because I wanted to buy fruit. **(to)**

2. We need money because we want to take a taxi. **(to)**

3. I use this box to keep my cables in it. **(for)**

4. They went to the café because they wanted a drink. **(for)**

5. This brush cleans shoes. **(for)**

Write complete sentences.

Purpose: to / for

What are these things for?

Practice 3

Make one sentence for each object. Use for + -ing or to + base verb.

a key

Use it to open a door
or for opening a door.

a camera

Use it to take photos
or for taking photos.

scissors

Use it to cut paper
or for cutting paper.

an alarm clock

Use it to wake you up
or for waking you up.

Example: A key is for opening a door. A key is used to open a door.

Find and fix the mistake

Practice 4

Each sentence has one problem. Correct it.

1 I went online for find a cheap hotel.

2 This is a tool to cutting vegetables.

3 She studies every day for pass her exam.

4 We went to the beach to a swim.

5 This bag is used for carry books.

Explain the rule you used after each correction.

Speaking: plan a useful day

Work with a partner. Plan a Saturday in your town.

Include at least six purpose sentences.

1. Go somewhere to do something.
2. Go somewhere for a thing or activity.
3. Describe two objects and their functions.
4. Say why you need money, time or a phone.

Useful starters

We’re going…
I need…
This is for…
I use it to…

Exit ticket

Choose the best ending for each sentence.

1 I opened the window ___ some fresh air.

2 I opened the window ___ get some fresh air.

3 This app is for ___ new words.

4 I use this app ___ learn new words.

Write your own

One sentence with to

One sentence with for

Check: What word comes after to / for?

Answer key and final check

Practice 1

1 to 2 for 3 for 4 to 5 for 6 to

Practice 2

1 to buy fruit 2 to take a taxi 3 for keeping cables
4 for a drink 5 for cleaning shoes

Practice 4

1 to find 2 for cutting / to cut 3 to pass
4 for a swim 5 for carrying / to carry

After to, use a base verb. After for, use a noun. Use for + -ing for an object’s function.