

Purpose with 'for + verb-ing' or 'to + infinitive'

For + verb-ing

We use 'for + verb-ing' to talk about the function of an object. It's used when we want to explain what something is generally used for or what its purpose is. We DON'T use 'for + infinitive'.

- A camera is for taking photos. (NOT: ~~for take photos.~~)
- The headphones are for listening to music.
- What's this for? (= what does this do / what is the function or purpose of this object?)
- This knife is for chopping onions.

When the subject of the sentence is a person, and we are talking about the function of an object, it's also possible to use 'to + infinitive', as well as 'for + verb-ing'.

- I use this box to store DVDs.
- I use this box for storing DVDs.

To + infinitive

When we want to talk about someone's intention or goal, about why they are doing something, we need to use 'to + infinitive'. In this case, the subject of the sentence is a person.

- I went to London to study English. (NOT: ~~for studying / for study.~~)
- I'm going home to relax. (NOT: ~~for relaxing / for relax.~~)
- She sat down to read.
- He went to the library to study.

For + noun

We can also use 'for' with a noun (NOT with verb-ing) to talk about someone's intentions or goals.

- I went to the shop for milk.
- I went to the shop to buy milk.
- ~~I went to the shop for buying milk.~~
- ~~I went to the shop for buy milk.~~

In order to

We can use 'in order to' or 'so as to' instead of 'to + infinitive'. This just makes it a bit clearer that we are talking about goals or intentions and it's also a bit more formal. It doesn't change the meaning.

- I went to London in order to study English.
- I went to London so as to study English.

Verb patterns

Some verbs (or adjectives or nouns) need 'to + infinitive' or 'for + verb-ing' as part of their patterns. This is different from the uses I've talked about above, because here we are not always talking about purpose. 'To + infinitive' and 'for + verb-ing' don't have a special meaning when they are part of a verb pattern. It's just that this construction always follows this verb or adjective. These are some examples, but there are many more.

- Decide + to + infinitive: I've decided to go home.
 - Promise + to + infinitive: She promised to arrive early.
 - Ask someone + to + infinitive: John asked Lucy to pass the salt.
 - Want + to + infinitive: I want to buy a new coat.
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- Be sorry + for + verb-ing / noun: I'm sorry for breaking your vase.
 - Apologise + for + verb-ing / noun: He apologised for forgetting about the meeting.
 - Thank someone + for + verb-ing / noun: Thank you for helping me.
 - Reward someone for + verb-ing / noun: The police rewarded him for finding the stolen car.