A + infinitive

Spanish · British English › Spanish

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Constructions with 'a + infinitive'

Hello there! Today we're diving into a very useful construction in Spanish: **a + infinitive**. It allows us to express the purpose of an action, an obligation, or something that needs to be done. Mastering this is key for fluent communication at B2 level!

Verb / Noun / Adjective + **a** + **Infinitive**

The **a + infinitive** construction often indicates the purpose or intention behind an action, especially after verbs of motion or those that signal beginning an activity, learning, or helping. Think of it as 'to do something' or 'in order to do something'.

Voy a estudiar para el examen.
I'm going to study for the exam.

Se sentó a leer el periódico.
He sat down to read the newspaper.

We can also use it to express an obligation or to indicate that something 'needs to be done', 'remains to be done', or 'should be done'. It often appears after nouns or expressions like *hay* (there is/are) or *tener* (to have).

Hay muchas cosas a hacer antes del viaje.
There are many things to do before the trip.

Es un problema a resolver.
It's a problem to solve.

Verb / Expression	Meaning	Example
ir a + infinitivo	to go to do something	Vamos a comer fuera.
venir a + infinitivo	to come to do something	Vengo a ayudarte.
empezar a + infinitivo	to start doing something	Empezó a llover.
aprender a + infinitivo	to learn to do something	Aprendí a conducir.
ayudar a + infinitivo	to help to do something	Te ayudo a limpiar.
ser / haber / tener algo a + infinitivo	something is / needs / remains to be done	Hay mucho a discutir.

Watch out for the difference between **a + infinitive** and **para + infinitive**! While both can express purpose, **a** is often used after specific verbs (of motion, beginning, learning) or to indicate a direct, almost obligatory purpose. **Para** is more general and means 'in order to' or 'for the purpose of'.

Fui a comprar pan.

~~Fui para comprar pan.~~
With verbs of motion, such as *ir*, we use **a** to indicate purpose.

Remember: Think of **A** as standing for **Action** or **Agenda** (things to do). It often signals an immediate intention or something that's **Awaiting your attention**!

- We use **a + infinitive** after many verbs to express purpose (e.g., *ir a, venir a, empezar a, aprender a*).
- It's used to indicate that something is obligatory or needs to be done (e.g., *problemas a resolver, cosas a hacer*).
- Remember the difference with **para + infinitive**, which is more general and can indicate a broader purpose or destination.

Part 1 — Choose the correct word

Circle the option that correctly fills each gap.

1. Me invitó _____ el fin de semana.
   He invited me to go out at the weekend.
   A) en salir B) de salir C) salir D) a salir

2. Nos ayudó _____ la conferencia.
   He helped us to organise the conference.
   A) de organizar B) para organizar C) a organizar D) organizar

3. Me senté _____ las noticias en el parque.
   I sat down to read the news in the park.
   A) en leer B) de leer C) a leer D) leer

4. Me acostumbré _____ solo por trabajo.
   I got used to travelling alone for work.
   A) de viajar B) para viajar C) a viajar D) viajar

5. Siéntate _____ esta canción nueva.
   Sit down to listen to this new song.
   A) en escuchar B) de escuchar C) a escuchar D) escuchar

6. Pensamos mucho _____ el problema.
   We thought hard to solve the problem.
   A) para que resolvieran B) para resolver C) para que resolvamos D) de resolver

7. Me comprometí _____ la tarea antes del viernes.
   I committed to handing in the assignment before Friday.
   A) para entregar B) a entregar C) de entregar D) entregar

8. Volvió _____ lo mismo.
   He said the same thing again.
   A) para decir B) a decir C) decir D) de decir

Part 2 — Fill in the gap

Write the missing word or phrase on the line.

1. Nos invitaron _____ en su casa.
   They invited us to have dinner at their house.

2. Al final se decidió _____ la propuesta.
   In the end he made up his mind to accept the proposal.

3. Fuimos al cine _____ la nueva película.
   We went to the cinema to see the new film.

4. Nos sentamos _____ el autobús.
   We sat down to wait for the bus.

5. El director se negó _____ el documento.
   The director refused to sign the document.

6. Me puse _____ toda la casa.
   I started cleaning the whole house.

Part 3 — Translate

Write each word in Spanish on the line.

1. to talk › _____

2. to repair › _____

3. to cook › _____

4. to participate › _____

5. to buy › _____

6. to discuss › _____

Part 4 — Match the pairs

Write the letter of the matching translation next to each term.

	Term		Translation
1.	a investigar	A	to investigate
2.	a terminar	B	to explain
3.	a explicar	C	to improve
4.	a estudiar	D	to visit
5.	a visitar	E	to sleep
6.	a mejorar	F	to study
7.	a dormir	G	to call
8.	a llamar	H	to finish

Answer Key

Part 1 — Choose the correct word

1. D) a salir
2. C) a organizar
3. C) a leer
4. C) a viajar
5. C) a escuchar
6. B) para resolver
7. B) a entregar
8. B) a decir

Part 2 — Fill in the gap

1. a cenar
2. a aceptar
3. a ver
4. a esperar
5. a firmar
6. a limpiar

Part 3 — Translate

1. a hablar
2. a reparar
3. a cocinar
4. a participar
5. a comprar
6. a discutir

Part 4 — Match the pairs

1. A (to investigate)
2. H (to finish)
3. B (to explain)
4. F (to study)
5. D (to visit)
6. C (to improve)
7. E (to sleep)
8. G (to call)