

Expressing Purpose

Expressing purpose tends to show the aim , the objective, or the goal behind doing an action. There are various structures that are used while doing it. We find the purpose by answering the question : « why ?»

The following expressions are the most common ones :

1- We use 'to + verb'

Example :

I went to the post office **to buy** some stamps.

2- We use the expression 'in order to'

Example :

I went to the post office **in order to** buy some stamps

3- We also may use 'so as to'

Example :

I went to the post office **so as to** buy some stamps.

4- The next expression that is frequently used is 'so that '

Example :

I am saving money **so that** I can buy a new car.

- We use so that + don't have to / won't have to / wouldn't have to to say that one action will help us avoid having to do something else:

Example :

I'm going shopping this evening so that I don't / won't have to go tomorrow.

- We use so that + won't / wouldn't / don't to say that one action will prevent another thing happening.

Example :

I took an umbrella so that I wouldn't / didn't get wet.

NB : Instead of so that I could learn, we can say in order to learn.

Instead of so that I didn't have to learn, we can say in order not to have to learn.

Remark :

Whenever the function word '**to**' is followed by a verb, this latter (the verb) is put in the **infinitive** (stem).

Expressing Ability/ Inability

Expressing ability stands for having the power, skill or means to do something. If we say "I

am able to swim", it is like saying "I have the power to swim". However, inability is the opposite i.e. we use it when we do not have the means to do something or to describe a

specific action not successfully completed.

How do we express ability and inability ?

For ability :

The expression : To be able to

The modal : can (in the present) , could (in the past)

For inability :

The expression : to be unable to / not to be able to

The modal : cannot (in the present) , could not (in the past).

The structure

Expressing ability/ inability in the present :

Subject + can / cannot + stem (verb in the infinitive)+ Object

E.g. I can lend you some money but I cannot pay your loan.

Subject + (am/ are /is) able to / not able to + stem (verb in the infinitive) + Object

E.g. you are able to borrow some money but you are not able to pay it back.

Expressing ability/ inability in the past :

Subject + could / could not + stem (verb in the infinitive) + object

E.g. I could lend you some money but I could not pay your loan.

Subject + (was/ were) able to / not able to + stem (verb in the infinitive) + Object

E.g. They were able to borrow some money but they were not able to pay it back.