

# La question de la classification des relatives infinitives

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## I. Définition(s) et propriétés objectives

### A. Définition(s) et exclusions

Relative infinitive clauses form one type of non-finite postmodifier. In *Mary is the person to do it* the infinitive clause corresponds to the finite relative clause *Mary is the person who should do it*, where the relative marker *who* functions as subject of the relative clause... The infinitival clause with its marker *to* functions as postmodifier to a noun phrase. The antecedent, which is also the head of the noun phrase, has a syntactic function in the infinitive.

Geisler 1995, 12

Critère (implicite) : paraphrase

PB 1 : Les propositions relatives infinitives (PRI) peuvent se trouver avant l'antécédent :

Ex : recherche GOOGLE "to do thing" → 25 100 occurrences

Mar 31, 2016 - A multi level scaffolding with multiple chandeliers and exquisite flower work is *the to do thing* for your reception gala !!

<https://br.pinterest.com/pin/130956301649275752/> [dernier accès : 03/02/2021]

<w1b-004 162>The 3 & 1 *to come* Boots reprints were 43p each.

unavoidable or *not to be avoided* current expenses. (Carlyle)

when she met the *never-to-be-forgotten* look (Dickens)

The *so-much-to-be-governed* passion of youth (Franklin)

Jespersen 1914, 340

PB 2 : « Circonstanciellles elliptiques de but »/propositions de but affaibli (*weak purposive clauses*)

<w2b-021 030> A spider monkey can hang by its tail from a branch with no trouble while it picks leaves or fruit *to eat*.

→ A spider monkey . . . picks leaves and fruit *in order to eat them* (/so that he could eat them).

→ A spider monkey . . . picks leaves and fruit *which it can then eat* (or will eat).

### PB 3 : Les infinitives gigognes

the last man *to arrive* → the man that was (the) last *to arrive* [/in arriving]  
(That was) an easy thing *to do* → a thing that is easy *to do* [= To do that thing is easy]

<s1a-013 248> It wasn't the right thing *to be reading* at all *to her*.

<s2b-026 091> She seems an unlikely candidate *to have created the unruly anti-intellectual specimen of eternal boyhood*.

<s2b-050 002> I must be the first minister in history *to have resigned because he was in full agreement with government policy*.

[such a thing/what a thing to have done; the thing to have done...]

[proposition de nouvelle définition: proposition relative dont le procès principal est posé par un verbe de forme infinitive (qui peut être postposé ou antéposé à « l'antécédent »)]

#### B. Propriétés objectives

- Introduction du sujet par *for* (ou autre préposition ou par une structure génitive/équivalente) :

<s2a-048 072> And it became... the script *for the scribes to learn first the style of their education*.

<s2a-039 026> And there is today quite a scramble by each of the major parties *to appropriate the word*.

<s1b-054 065> I do not wish to cut the time of backbenchers *to participate in this debate*.

<w2b-005 100> Devereaux investigates an IRA plot *to kill one of England's most powerful men, Lord Slough*.

- Hamelinage (ou préposition isolée en fin d'infinitive, ou occultée) :

<w1a-007 003> In an attempt to evaluate the usefulness and validity of the medical model as a framework with which *to conceptualize psychopathology*, a number of fundamental issues concerning the existence and recognition of mental illness will be discussed.

<s1b-025 133> The thing *to spend your money on* is a subscription to the local horticultural society.

<w2c-004 034> They lacked the means *to get back into the game*.

- Forme passive :

<w2b-014 046> Policies and politicians are rapidly reduced to commodities *to be sold* like lager.

<w2f-011 005> Murder, on the other hand, is a practice *not to be encouraged*.

- rôle appositif (non-constitutif) :

<w2c-015 041> Lord James is expected to announce details of a new publicity drive *to coincide with the extension of the rent-to-mortgage scheme.*

<w2c-015 048> These sentiments have been enshrined in law in the Children Act of 1989, soon *to be implemented in England.*

[pb de classification si l'on se remet uniquement à ces propriétés/ à la fonction syntaxique de l'élément relativisé au sein de l'infinitive]

## II. Les infinitives exprimant l'usage destiné (*earmarking*)

### A. Les propositions de but affaibli

<w2b-021 030> A spider monkey can hang by its tail from a branch with no trouble while it picks leaves or fruit *to eat.*

Interprétation circonstancielle (résultative) :

➔ A spider monkey . . . picks leaves and fruit *in order to eat them (/so that he could eat them).*

Interprétation relative (appositive, non constitutive) :

➔ A spider monkey . . . picks leaves and fruit (,) *which it can then eat (or will eat).*

- Propositions de but affaibli et lacunes syntaxiques :

<s2b-017 013> The United States is preparing to mobilise major combat units from the reserves *to send \_\_\_ to the Gulf.*

<s1a-078 136> So basically you've got 86 pounds a week *to live on \_\_\_.*

<s1b-028 001> Dr Sacks I'm not going to ask you to encapsulate your arguments in a few sentences because if that were possible the BBC would feel rather foolish I think at having offered you three hours of air time *to develop them [\_\_].*

They hired John [\_\_] *to go over the reports.*

The documents were passed on to the records department (*for them*) *to be classified.*

- Analyse et propriétés sémantiques :

La proposition **dominante pose** ou **implique** que l'**entité** coréférentielle au sujet ou bien à un autre élément lacunaire s'il y en a (au sein de l'infinitive), est **disponible** et mobilisable en l'état pour la fonction considérée.

L'infinitive exprime un **usage destiné** pour cette entité, qui se trouve caractérisée en retour comme étant destiné à cet usage : la **possibilité d'une lecture relative** (appositive, non constitutive) est ainsi **mécaniquement induite** (sauf blocage syntaxique).

... it picks leaves or fruit *to eat*.

→ 'It picks leaves or fruit' + 'the leaves or fruit are (earmarked) for (the purpose of) eating'

The documents were passed on to the records department, and they were meant *to be classified*.

\*The documents were passed on to the records department, which were meant *to be classified*.

- Double relativation :

<s1a-001 032> I enjoyed the **time** that I was given *to study*...

I was given **time** *to study* ↔ I was given time during which I was able to study.

I enjoyed the **time** that \_\_\_ I was given \_\_\_ *to study* \_\_\_



[...] and also thank her for the much appreciated **cherry cake** \_\_\_ she gave me \_\_\_ *to bring up* \_\_\_ here.



<w2d-015 055> Pressure is exerted on the player in possession of the ball by challenging him or moving towards him, cutting down on the **time and space** he has available in which to play.

*B. Les relatives infinitives constitutives (/déterminatives) exprimant l'usage destiné*

- Quand l'infinitive opère une restriction référentielle (= constitutive ou déterminative) :

<s1b-031 146> I don't think that would give me any **excuse** *to report something wrongly*.

<w1b-026 047> Large medium sized firms have so **much** *to offer*.

<w2d-001 053> You will also get a **voucher** *to help you pay for your glasses*.

- Quand la détermination de l'infinitive est intégrée (article défini) :

<s1a-005 233> He'd already given Xepe the **money** *to get the strawbs and Pimm's*.

<s2b-003 058> I could give them the **backing** *to go out and win the election*.

<w2b-034 042> They did not have the **expertise** *to design transmitters*.

- Quand la dominante ne pose plus la disponibilité du référent désigné par l'antécédent :

<s2b-004 041> It's clear the coalition is not in a **mood** *to negotiate over its demands*.

<w2b-014 046> Policies and politicians are rapidly reduced to **commodities** *to be sold* like lager.

<w2f-012 044> It was the **moment** *to be honest with her*.

### III. L'hypothèse des « clivées présentatives » et PRI exprimant l'obligation déontique

#### A. Une autre famille de relatives infinitives

Nombreux contextes avec tour présentatif (*there is, X has, with...*) + sens nécessité (déontique) :

<s1a-039 308> And I've got so many events *to go to*.

<s2a-016 101> He's got five kilometres *to go* now.

<s2a-016 125> Bruno Cenghialta here always checking over his shoulder with two kilometres *to go* to see if he can see those riders closing in on him.

<w2d-013 134> There are four basic points *to remember when hitting a low volley*.

<w2f-013 043> There was the future *to consider*, after all.

- Argument 1 contre une analyse de relative classique : intonation

My brother who lives in Nairobi prefers sake to green tea:

→ Déterminative : /My brother who lives in NaiRObi/ prefers sake to GREEN tea/

→ Appositive : /My BROther/ who lives in NaiRObi/ prefers sake to GREEN tea/  
(adapté de) Tench 1996, 21

There's the future to consider.

/There's the FUture to consider/

There is loads to do.

/There is LOADS to do/

- Argument 2 contre une analyse de relative classique : introduction avec pronom relatif

UD: There were many opponents *to fight against* [, after new members joined the karate club.]

OD: There were too many foes *to fight against* [: the Greeks were greatly outnumbered.]

→ There were many opponents *against whom to fight*.

→ ?! There were too many foes *against whom to fight*.

UD: There's a new show to talk about [, that's quite exciting !]

OD: There's another issue to talk about [before we end this meeting.]

→ There's a new show *about which to talk*.

→ ?! There's another issue *about which to talk*.

- Hypothèse des « clivées » présentatives (ou « clivées de spécification non exhaustives ») :

*There's the use of clefts he wants to explain.*

[There's this type of infinitive to explain: /There's this type of inFInitive to explain/]

Presupposition:	'he wants to explain x, y, z'	'We have to explain x' (not exclusive)
Focus:	'the use of clefts'	'this type of infinitive'
Assertion:	'x = the use of clefts'	'x = the use of clefts'

(adapté de) Lambrecht, 2001, 505

?! There's another issue *about which* to talk.

→ *another issue* peut difficilement être dans le focus, puis en position thématisée.

#### B. Les PRI constitutives (/déterminatives) exprimant l'obligation déontique

- Absence de tour présentatif :

<s1a-053 002> I think probably the **thing** to do is to rush through the introduction.

<s2a-022 067> Uhm now that's **something** to bear in mind when we look at Caesar's writings.

<s2b-020 101> Mr Major has become the **man** to beat.

#### IV. Les autres relatives infinitives

##### A. Les PRI provenant d'une infinitive de but liée à un procès nominalisé

- L'infinitive correspond à une circonstancielle de but (+ l'antécédent indique un moyen) :

<s2b-045 046> Thus he undertook **work** to determine the shape of the earth.

← He worked to determine the shape of the earth.

<w1a-017 119> A 'drive' is a **change in our voluntary behaviour** to satisfy our motivations.

← We change our voluntary behaviour to satisfy our motivations.

<s2b-004 071> British and American engineers are taking part in a **major operation** to remove wreckage from the main highway north of Kuwait City.

← British and American engineers are acting (doing so within the framework of a military plan) to remove wreckage from the main highway north of Kuwait city.

<w2f-010 083> There had been **less and less** to sweeten time's passing in Ægypt.

← Fewer and fewer things happened to sweeten time's passing in Ægypt.

- L'infinitive correspond à un complément essentiel (= argument) exprimant le but :

<s1b-063 057> I think initially they were arrested for **conspiracy** to supply drugs.

← They conspired to supply drugs.

<s2b-001 014> The government comes under **pressure** to bring forward its plans for care in the community.

← They pressured the government for it to bring forward its plans...

<w1a-003 005> The Franks did not make **great efforts** *to try and govern Brittany*.

← The Franks did greatly struggle to try and govern Brittany.

≠ <s1b-040 105> ... his great desire *to get back into Downing Street was to have his tit for tat with Teddy Heath*.

← He greatly desired to get back into Downing Street...

<w2f-017 035> He had the ability *to understand figures*...

← He could understand figures

## B. Les PRI « be to »

### 1. procès à venir, déterminé par un plan, ou un arrangement préalable

<w2c-015 041> Lord James is expected to announce details of a new publicity drive *to coincide with the extension of the rent-to-mortgage scheme*.

↔ a new publicity drive that (/ , which?) is to coincide with....

### 2. futur dans le passé

<s2b-014 061> A French light armoured division was one of the forces *to make a thrust into Iraq*.

<w1b-026 083> It was fascinating to see the wide range of products *to be made by the finalists*.

### 3. possibilité, potentialité

<w2a-031 065> It appeared that the advantages *to be derived from blind shaft drilling* more than justified the technological investment in the work.

### 4. instruction, obligation déontique

<w1b-017 101> The dates *to be avoided* are March 20 to 21 and April 22 to June 21 inclusive.

<w2f-011 005> Murder, on the other hand, is a practice not *to be encouraged*.

### 5. expression idiomatique de l'avenir

<w2b-029 030> There might yet be other environmental horrors *to spew forth from this war*.

<w2c-015 048> These sentiments have been enshrined in law in the Children Act of 1989, soon *to be implemented in England*.

### 6. nécessaire épistémique

<s2a-046 058> As I said before, I'm trained as a toxicologist uh toxicology being the study of the effects of chemicals in the body *to cause harm*. [= *which are bound to...*]

<s2b-030 022> But he was not a man *to be influenced by their suffering*. [= *who would...*]

### 7. construction *be (=have) to do with*

<w1b-004 040> He just did everything *to do with the house*.

V. Conclusion

**Statut relatif canonique discutable pour l’infinitive :**

gigognes :

infinitives modifiant  
un pivot adjectival  
*the right thing to do*

prop. de but affaibli

exprimant  
l’usage destiné  
*I gave him two hours to finish*

« clivées présentatives »

exprimant l’obligation  
(nécessité déontique)  
*They have much to do.*

**PRI classiques :**

PRI

« be to »

*a day yet to come*

PRI

provenant d’une inf.  
de but liée à un  
procès nominalisé

*his work to find a vaccine*



PRI

constitutives (/dét.)  
exprimant  
l’usage destiné  
*the time to play*



PRI

constitutives (/dét.)  
exprimant l’obligation  
sans tour présentatif  
*the thing to say*

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