

Joining an association and giving your reasons

French B1 (intermediate) · Lesson

Quick answer: To explain why you volunteer in French, use *pour plus* an infinitive when the same person acts twice: Je m'engage pour aider. When someone else benefits, use *pour que plus* the subjunctive: Je m'engage pour que le quartier change. Key words are le bénévolat, une association and un bénévole.

Level: French B1 (CEFR intermediate) · **Standards:** CEFR B1, Spoken production

How do you talk about volunteering in French?

Volunteering is le bénévolat in French. A volunteer is un bénévole or une bénévole, and the group they work for is usually une association. These words come up in job interviews, neighborhood meetings and everyday small talk.

French	English
le bénévolat	volunteering (unpaid work)
s'engager dans une association	to get involved in a nonprofit
donner un coup de main	to lend a hand
une permanence	a staffed shift at the association's office
une maraude	a night round to help homeless people
une cotisation	a membership fee
un don	a donation

Banque alimentaire de Nantes

Nous cherchons des bénévoles !

Samedi, de 9 h à 13 h : tri des dons

Venez pour aider, pas besoin d'expérience.

Un café est offert pour que la matinée commence bien.

[Inscription à la permanence, 12 rue des Halles](#)

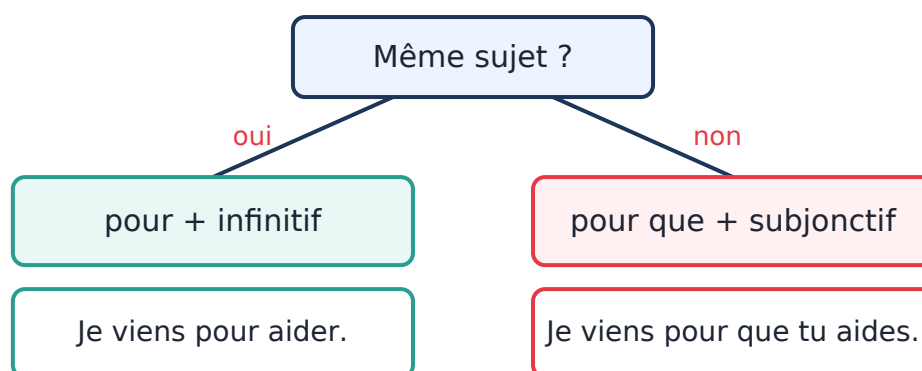
A flyer that uses both pour + infinitive and pour que + subjunctive

How do you explain why you do something with pour?

To give a goal, French uses **pour**. When the person who acts and the person who benefits are the same, add an infinitive: Je m'engage **pour** rencontrer mes voisins. — I get involved to meet my neighbors.

Rule: pour que + subjunctive

When the subject changes, use **pour que** (**pour qu'** before a vowel) and put the verb in the subjunctive: Elle cuisine pour que les familles mangent bien. — She cooks so that the families eat well.



Choosing between the two constructions

How do you form the subjunctive after pour que?

For regular verbs, take the *ils* form of the present, drop *-ent*, and add the endings *-e*, *-es*, *-e*, *-ions*, *-iez*, *-ent*. Only *nous* and *vous* differ from the present tense.

Subject	aider	faire (irregular)	pouvoir (irregular)
pour que je / j'	aide	fasse	puisse
pour que tu	aides	fasses	puisses
pour qu'il / elle	aide	fasse	puisse
pour que nous	aidions	fassions	puissions
pour que vous	aidiez	fassiez	puissiez
pour qu'ils / elles	aident	fassent	puissent

Four more verbs cannot be guessed: être gives que je sois, avoir gives que j'aie, aller gives que j'aille and savoir gives que je sache.

Common mistake

English speakers often copy the English pattern and repeat the subject. Say *Je viens pour aider*, not *Je viens pour que j'aide*. After **pour que**, say *pour qu'ils puissent*, never *pour qu'ils peuvent*.

Examples

- Marc vient le jeudi pour que Nadia puisse se reposer. — Marc comes on Thursdays so Nadia can rest.
- Nous collectons des manteaux pour que personne n'ait froid. — We collect coats so nobody is cold.
- Je tiens la permanence pour rendre service. — I staff the desk to do a favor.

Culture note

Most French nonprofits are an *association loi 1901*, a legal form created in 1901. Young people aged 16 to 25 can also do a *service civique*, a paid volunteer mission of several months.

Zoé's tip

Ask one question before choosing: who does the second action? If it is the same person, use *pour + infinitive*. If it is someone else, use *pour que* and reach for the subjunctive!

Key points to remember

- *Pour + infinitive* expresses a goal when both actions have the same subject.
- *Pour que + subjunctive* is required when the second subject is different.
- Regular subjunctive endings: -e, -es, -e, -ions, -iez, -ent.
- Irregular stems: *fasse*, *puisse*, *soit*, *ait*, *aille*, *sache*.
- A volunteer is *un bénévole* or *une bénévole*; most nonprofits are *associations loi 1901*.

Joining an association and giving your reasons: frequently asked questions

What does *bénévole* mean in French?

Un bénévole or *une bénévole* is a person who works without pay for a cause or an association. The activity is called *le bénévolat*. Do not confuse it with *le volontaire*, who often has a formal, sometimes paid, mission.

When do you use *pour que* instead of *pour*?

Use *pour que* when the second verb has a different subject from the first. If the same person does both actions, use *pour plus an infinitive*. *Je travaille pour gagner* is correct; *Je travaille pour que je gagne* is not.

Why does *pour que* take the subjunctive?

A goal is not yet a fact, so French marks it with the subjunctive mood. The same is true of *afin que* and *bien que*. Memorize each form together with its subject, for example *pour que tu puisses*.

How do you say to join an association in French?

Say *adhérer à une association* for becoming an official member, or *s'inscrire* for signing up. *Rejoindre une association* also works in conversation and simply means to join the group.

Can I use *pour que* when the subject does not change?

In standard French, no. Replace the clause with *pour plus an infinitive*. *Je prépare la salle pour pouvoir commencer* is natural, while *pour que je puisse commencer* sounds heavy and is avoided when the subject has not changed.