

SPECIAL CONSTRUCTIONS WITH INFINITIVE VERBS

THE CAUSATIVE *FAIRE*:

FAIRE + INFINITIVE, meaning to make or have someone do something, or to have or cause something to be done, requires special attention.

FAIRE AND THE INFINITIVE it governs form a unit. Consequently, all nouns, whether subject or object of the infinitive, must follow it. All pronouns, whether subject or object of the infinitive, must precede **FAIRE**, except in the affirmative imperative where they follow it. Otherwise, the only other words that may separate **FAIRE** from its infinitive are the second part of a negation, certain adverbs, or a reflexive pronoun:

Faites venir le caissier dans mon bureau.

Je l'y ferai venir immédiatement.

Avez-vous fait réparer votre bicyclette?

Nous le ferons écrire à sa famille.
(We shall make him write to his family.)

Whenever a direct object is present, be it a pronoun, a noun, or a clause, the subject of the infinitive is expressed by an indirect object pronoun:

Je lui ferai lire ce document.
I shall have him read this document.

Je le lui ferai lire.
I'll have him read it.

Les documents que je lui ai fait lire...
The documents I had him read...

Faites-lui comprendre que je suis occupé.
Make him understand I am busy.

When in the English sentence the subject of the infinitive is a noun and a direct object is present, the subject of the French sentence is expressed by **À + NOUN** or by **PAR +**

NOUN (i.e. an agent). In those cases the infinitive has a passive meaning in French:

Vous devriez faire lire ces documents à votre avocat.

You ought to make your lawyer read these documents (You ought to have these documents read by your lawyer).

J'ai fait écrire à Paul une lettre de remerciements à Mme X.

I made Paul write a thank-you letter to Mrs. X.

If **À + NOUN** could be confused with an indirect object, then **PAR + NOUN** must be used.

In the sentences above, **À VOTRE AVOCAT** may be used because it is unlikely that the documents would be read **TO** a lawyer. **À PAUL** is used because the context makes it clear that the letter can be written only by Paul, and not **TO** Paul. But in the following examples, the distinction must be made in order to avoid ambiguity:

J'ai fait écrire une lettre par Paul.

I made Paul write a letter.

J'ai fait écrire une lettre à Paul.

I had a letter written to Paul.

In doubtful cases, it is usually safer to use **PAR + NOUN**.

PAR + NOUN must also be used to express the agent when the object of the infinitive is a person or when the infinitive has an indirect object. **PAR + NOUN** must be used when in the English sentence **BY + NOUN** is used to specify the agent of the action in a passive construction:

J'ai fait réparer ma bicyclette par un bon mécanicien.

I had my bicycle repaired by a good mechanic.

Faites réveiller les enfants par la bonne.

Have the maid wake the children.

Il lui a fait répondre par sa secrétaire.

He had his secretary answer him.

Je ferai répondre à cette lettre par ma secrétaire.

I'll have my secretary respond to this letter.

LUI, LEUR, ME, NOUS, etc..., are used whether the antecedent is **À + NOUN** or **PAR**

+ **NOUN**. The apparent ambiguity is only one of form. Normally the context will make the meaning clear, and it is only in rare cases that it should be necessary to use **PAR + DISJUNCTIVE PRONOUN**:

Je la lui ferai écrire.
I shall have it written to (or by) him.

Je leur en ferai donner.
I shall have some given to (or by) them.

Je lui ferai faire une robe.
I shall have a dress made for (or by) her.

Je vous en ferai faire une.
I shall have one made for (or by) you.

SE FAIRE + INFINITIVE is used to show that the subject will have (will have had) or is having something done for himself or to himself:

Nous nous sommes fait bâtir une maison.
We had a new house built (for ourselves).

Je me ferai couper les cheveux.
I shall have my hair cut (at the barber's or beauty shop).

LAISSER AND VERBS OF PERCEPTION + INFINITIVE

Some of the constructions which are mandatory with the causative **FAIRE** plus the infinitive are or may be used with **LAISSER**, particularly, and with verbs of perception such as **VOIR, ENTENDRE, REGARDER, ECOUTER, SENTIR, APPERCETOIR**: the constructions given below are not compulsory, but are customary:

When the subject of the infinitive is a noun, or an indefinite pronoun, it usually follows the infinitive of an intransitive verb, provided the latter has no complement:

Je vois venir un taxi.
I see a taxi coming.

Ne laissez pas partir vos amis.
Don't let your friends leave.

Nous sentions venir un orage.
We felt a storm coming.

Avez-vous vu ma soeur descendre du train?
Did you see my sister get off the train?

With **LAISSER**, sometimes with **VOIR** and **ENTENDRE**, when the direct object of the infinitive is a noun or a clause, an indirect object pronoun is used for the subject:

Je lui ai laissé voir mon inquiétude.
I let her see my anxiety.

Je lui ai laissé voir que j'étais inquiet.
I let her see that I was worried.

Nous lui avons entendu dire que vous aviez renoncé à votre voyage.
We heard him say that you had given up on your plans for a trip.

With **LAISSER + VOIR, CROIRE, ENTENDRE, FAIRE**, the noun subject is expressed by **À + NOUN** if a direct object is present:

Ne laissez pas voir votre inquiétude à votre femme.
Don't let your wife see that you are worried.

When the infinitive has an indirect object, or both a direct and indirect object, or when the infinitive is a reflexive or reciprocal verb, the regular construction is used:

Avez-vous vu le caissier leur donner leur chèque?
Did you see the cashier give them their check?

Oui, je l'ai vu le leur donner.
Yes, I saw him give it to them.

Je les entends se quereller.
I hear them quarreling.

Ne le laissez pas s'en approcher.
Don't let him go near it.