

Grammar Practice: Infinitives and Gerunds

What are infinitives and gerunds?

Gerunds and infinitives are sometimes referred to as verb complements. They look like verbs but do not function like them.

Gerunds: functions and uses

A gerund ends with *-ing* and names an activity rather than a person or thing. Any action verb can be made into a gerund: *bake* → *baking*.

Gerunds look like present participles, which are used to form an action in progress or incomplete actions: *she was baking cookies*. However, gerunds are different from present participles because gerunds are *-ing* verbs that function as nouns.

Gerund	Present Participle
Baking takes a lot of time.	She was baking cookies.
I don't like living alone.	I am living alone.
Spelling is my best subject.	He was spelling the new words.

Gerunds can appear at the beginning of a sentence when used as a **subject**:

Logging [subject] is [verb] a hobby of mine.
Fidgeting helps me focus.

Gerunds can act as an **object** following the verb or preposition:

Daniel [subject] quit [verb] smoking [object] two months ago.
I look forward to helping you paint the house.

Infinitives: functions and uses

An infinitive is a *verb + to*: *to think*. Infinitives can function as nouns (as subjects of the sentence), adverbs, or adjectives.

Infinitive as **nouns (subjects)** at the beginning of a sentence:

To travel [noun/subject] around the world requires [verb] a lot of money.
To give advice is easy.

Infinitives as **adverbs** following the verb:

Jim [noun/subject] always forgets [verb] to eat [adverb].
My sister decided to get a job.

Infinitives as **adjectives** following a noun:

Tara [noun/subject] has [verb] the ability to succeed [adjective].
I have some things to sell.

Common words followed by gerunds

abhor	discontinue	give up (stop)	prevent	urge
acknowledge	discuss	keep (continue)	put off	warrant
admit	dislike	keep on	recall	
advise	dispute	mention	recollect	
allow	dread	mind (object to)	recommend	
anticipate	endure	miss	report	
appreciate	enjoy	necessitate	resent	
avoid	escape	omit	resist	
be worth	evade	permit	resume	
can't help	explain	picture	risk	
celebrate	fancy	necessitate	shirk	
confess	fear	omit	shun	
consider	feel like	permit	suggest	
defend	feign	picture	support	
delay	finish	postpone	tolerate	
detest	forgive	practice	understand	

Common words followed by infinitives

agree	demand	mean	seek
appear	deserve	need	seem
arrange	determine	neglect	shudder
ask	elect	offer	strive
attempt	endeavor	pay	struggle
beg	expect	plan	swear
can/can't afford	fail	prepare	tend
can/can't wait	get	pretend	threaten
care	grow (up)	profess	turn out
chance	guarantee	promise	venture
choose	hesitate	prove	volunteer
claim	hope	refuse	wait
come	hurry	remain	want
consent	incline	request	wish
dare	learn	resolve	would like
decide	manage	say	yearn

Verbs followed by a gerund or infinitive with little to no change in meaning

begin	can't stand	hate	love	propose
can't bear	continue	like	prefer	start

Verbs followed by a gerund or infinitive with a change in meaning

forget	I forgot to meet him. <i>(I didn't meet him because I forgot to do it.)</i>
	I forgot meeting him. <i>(I don't have the memory of meeting him before.)</i>
go on	He went on to learn English and French. <i>(After a period of time, he learned the languages.)</i>
	He went on learning English and French. <i>(He continued learning the languages.)</i>
quit	She quit to work here. <i>(She quit another job in order to work here.)</i>
	She quit working here. <i>(She quit her job here. She doesn't work here anymore.)</i>
regret	I regret promising to help you. <i>(I'm sorry that I made the promise.)</i>
	I regret to tell you that we can't hire you. <i>(I'm telling you now, and I'm sorry.)</i>
remember	She remembered to visit her grandmother. <i>(She didn't forget to visit.)</i>
	She remembered visiting her grandmother. <i>(She had memories of this visit.)</i>
stop	I stopped to call you. <i>(I interrupted another action in order to call you.)</i>
	I stopped calling you. <i>(I stopped this activity. Maybe we had a fight.)</i>
try	I tried to open the window. <i>(I attempted this action but didn't succeed.)</i>
	I tried opening the window. <i>(This was one option I sampled. Maybe the room was hot.)</i>

Practice

Exercise 1. Look at each sentence and decide how the infinitive is used. Then write *noun*, *adverb*, or *adjective* in the blank provided.

1. _____ I bought the car *to make* you happy.
2. _____ He doesn't like *to run* after a big dinner.
3. _____ The book *to read* is *Moby Dick*.
4. _____ She gave me a gift *to show* her gratitude.
5. _____ *To pay* taxes is a privilege.

Exercise 2. Look at each sentence and decide how the *italicized* word is used. Then write *verb*, *adjective*, or *noun* in the blank provided.

1. _____ *Running* water is a modern convenience.
2. _____ We are *taking* the family on a picnic.
3. _____ This is a *continuing* problem.
4. _____ *Playing* in the street is dangerous.
5. _____ I don't like *skiing*.
6. _____ Do you prefer *jogging* or tennis.

Exercise 3. Explain how the meaning of each sentence changes if a gerund or infinitive is used.

1. I quit (to pursue/pursuing) my passion.
2. After everything that happened, Mary stopped (to send/sending) texts.
3. My brother tried (to study/studying) biology.
4. I remembered (to try/trying) new ice cream flavors.