



Gerunds and Infinitives

Gerunds

In English, we can use the –ing form of a verb ('going', 'coming', 'sleeping') in different situations. For example, we use it as part of the continuous tenses 'I am sleeping'. But there are some other cases where we use it.

We use the gerund (verb-ing):

1. After certain verbs (for example 'enjoy').

- I **enjoy** *reading*.

Here are more words that take the gerund:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| • fancy | I fancy <i>seeing</i> a film tonight. |
| • discuss | We discussed <i>going</i> on holiday together. |
| • dislike | I dislike <i>waiting</i> for buses. |
| • finish | We finished <i>preparing</i> for the meeting. |
| • mind | I don't mind <i>coming</i> early. |
| • suggest | He suggested <i>staying</i> at the Grand Hotel. |
| • recommend | They recommended <i>meeting</i> earlier. |
| • keep | He kept <i>working</i> although he felt ill. |
| • avoid | She avoided <i>talking</i> to her boss. |

2. Instead of a noun

- *Smoking* isn't allowed here
- *Swimming* is very good exercise.



3. After prepositions

- I drank a cup of coffee **before** *leaving*.
- It's a good idea to brush your teeth **after** *eating*.

*We also use the gerund after the preposition in phrasal verbs:

- I **gave up** *smoking*.

The infinitive (with 'to')

1. After certain verbs (for example 'decide').

- He **decided** to leave early (affirmative).
- He **decided** not to stay (negative).

Here are more words that take 'to + infinitive':

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| • agree | She agreed <i>to give</i> a presentation at the meeting. |
| • ask* | I asked <i>to leave</i> early / I asked him <i>to leave</i> early. |
| • decide | We decided <i>to go out</i> for dinner. |
| • help* | He helped <i>to clean</i> the kitchen / he helped his flatmate <i>to clean</i> the kitchen. |
| • plan | She plans <i>to buy</i> a new flat next year. |
| • hope | I hope <i>to pass</i> the exam. |
| • learn | They are learning <i>to sing</i> . |
| • want* | I want <i>to come</i> to the party / I want him <i>to come</i> to the party. |
| • would like* | I would like <i>to see</i> her tonight / I would like you <i>to see</i> her tonight. |
| • promise | We promised <i>not to be</i> late. |

*We can use **an object** before the infinitive with these verbs.

(Note that 'help' can also be followed by the infinitive without 'to' with no difference in meaning: 'I helped *to carry it*' = 'I helped *carry it*'.)



2. After many adjectives (for example 'pleased').

- She's **pleased** to have a new job.

Here are adjectives that take 'to + infinitive':

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| • happy | I'm happy <i>to see</i> you. |
| • right | She was right <i>to leave</i> early. |
| • wrong | They were wrong <i>to spend</i> so much money. |
| • careful | The teacher was careful <i>to speak</i> clearly. |
| • lucky | He was lucky <i>to survive</i> the crash. |
| • likely | It's likely <i>to snow</i> tonight. |

3. To express purpose.

We often use 'to + infinitive' to say why we do something.

- I came to London *to study* = (I came to London because I wanted to study).
- I went home *to have* lunch. NOT: ~~I went home for have lunch.~~

Some verbs can take either the gerund or 'to + infinitive' with no change in meaning.

For example:

- It started *raining*.
- It started *to rain*.

Here are some more verbs like this:

	To + infinitive	Gerund
continue	I continued <i>to work</i> .	I continued <i>working</i> .
begin	She began <i>to sing</i> .	She began <i>singing</i> .
prefer	I prefer <i>to eat</i> at home.	I prefer <i>eating</i> at home.



Bare infinitive

We use the bare infinitive:

1. After modal verbs.

These modal verbs are:

- can
- could
- will
- would
- may
- might
- shall
- should
- must

Here are some examples:

- She can *speak* great English.
- We could *go* to the cinema.
- They will *be* late.
- I would *like* a new laptop.
- It may *rain* at the weekend.
- I might *be* late home today.
- Shall we *meet* at eight?
- You really should *study* more.
- You must *try* the new restaurant.

There is one exception.

'ought' takes 'to + infinitive.'

- I ought *to visit* my granny.



2. After 'let', 'make' and 'help'.

Let is always followed by 'object' + 'bare infinitive'.

- Let's *go*.
- Let John *do* it.

Make is also followed by 'object' + 'bare infinitive'.

- Julie made John *cry*.
- The teacher made us *write* an essay.
- The music made him *want* to dance.

*Be careful. In the passive, 'make' takes 'to + infinitive'.

- He was made *to open* his case.

Help sometimes takes 'to + infinitive', and sometimes takes the bare infinitive. There is no difference in meaning. For example:

- I helped *to carry* it.
- I helped her *carry* it.

3. After some verbs of perception

We can use either the bare infinitive or the gerund with many verbs of perception. The meaning is slightly different depending on which one we choose. Some of these verbs include: *watch, hear, feel, sense, see*.

- I saw her *cross* the road (I saw the whole action from start to finish).
- I saw her *crossing* the road (I saw part of the action, not the whole thing).



4. After expressions with 'why'.

For example:

- Why *go* home early?
- Why *study* English?
- Why *not live* in London?