

Gerunds and infinitives*

A The gerund is used in the following cases:

1 as the subject/object/complement of a clause or sentence

Subject: **Reading** in the car makes me feel sick

Object: I find **shopping** for clothes really boring

Complement: My favourite sport is **swimming**

2 after prepositions

I'm not very **good at making** things

NB to is a preposition in the following verbs:

I look forward to hearing from you soon

I can't **get used to living** without her

3 after certain verbs

Peter **suggested going** for a picnic

B The infinitive with to is used:

1 to express purpose

I'm learning English **to help** me get a better job.

2 after many adjectives. eg *surprised, delighted, disappointed, easy, happy, important, lucky, necessary, normal, possible, surprised.*

I was **surprised to hear** she had failed the exam.

3 after certain verbs

He **offered to give** her a lift, but she **decided to go** by train instead.

C Gerunds and infinitives after verbs

1 Verb + gerund

Have you **finished cleaning** your room?

The following verbs, like *finish*, are normally followed by the gerund:

a Certain verbs expressing likes and dislikes: *adore, detest, dislike, enjoy, don't mind, can't stand*

b Other verbs: *admit, avoid, can't help, consider, delay, deny, feel like, forgive, give up, imagine, involve, keep, mind, miss, postpone, put off, practise, prevent, resist, risk, suggest*

2 Verb + infinitive with to

He **promised not to tell** anyone what she had said.

a The following verbs, like *promise*, are normally followed by the infinitive with to: (can't) *afford, agree, appear, arrange, ask, attempt, choose, decide, expect, help, hesitate, hope, learn, manage, offer, prepare, pretend, refuse, seem, deserve.*

b The infinitive with to is also used after: *would like, would love, would hate, would prefer*

3 Verb + gerund or infinitive

a *Like, love, hate and prefer* are usually followed by the gerund. However, the infinitive is also possible with *like*, if any, difference in meaning.

I love going/to go for long walks in the hills.

The infinitive is common for specific situations:

I hate to interrupt, but we really must be going.

b *Begin, start, continue and intend* can be followed by the gerund or infinitive with no change in meaning.

When I arrived **it started to rain/raining**

c *Forget, remember, go on, mean, need, regret, stop and try* can be followed by the gerund or the infinitive but with a change in meaning.

▪ *remember/forget* + gerund = (not) to recall a previous action

I remember coming here when I was young.

I'll never forget seeing U2 in concert.

remember/forget + infinitive = (not) to remember what you have to do

We must remember to feed the cat before we go.

Don't forget to phone me if you need any help.

▪ *go on* + gerund = to continue with the same activity

Some footballers **go on playing** professionally until they're nearly 40.

go on + infinitive = to change to a different activity
After a successful career as a football player, Johan Cruyff **went on to become** a respected manager.

▪ *mean* + gerund = to involve

Dieting usually means giving up things you enjoy.

mean + infinitive = to intend

I meant to phone the electrician but I forgot.

▪ *need* + gerund = (passive meaning)

This house **needs painting** (= *needs to be painted*)

need + infinitive = (active meaning)

I need to get some new shoes.

▪ *regret* + gerund = to be sorry for a previous action

I regret going to see that film: it was boring.

regret + infinitive = to be sorry for what you are going to say (formal use)

We regret to inform you that we are unable to repair your washing machine.

▪ *stop* + gerund = to stop an activity you are doing

I've stopped smoking: it's too expensive.

stop + infinitive = to stop doing one thing in order to do another

If you're driving long distances, you should stop to have a rest every two hours

▪ *try* + gerund = to experiment in order to see what will happen

Try resting for a while: you might feel better then.

try + infinitive = to make an effort; to attempt to do something

Alan tried to stop the thief as he ran away.

* adapted from Roy Norris: *Ready for First Certificate*, Macmillan