

Verbs with infinitives and gerunds

Verbs used with infinitives only

We use infinitives, not gerunds, after verbs such as *hope* and *offer* (1). After verbs such as *invite* and *tell*, we must include a noun or object pronoun to identify the subject before the infinitive (2). After verbs such as *ask* and *want*, we can include the subject of the infinitive or leave it out if it's the same as the subject of the verb (3).

- 1 I'm **hoping to get** a day off soon. • We **offered to pay** for the damage. (NOT ~~offered paying~~)
- 2 They **told me not to wait** for them. • David **invited us to go** with him. (NOT ~~invited to go~~)
- 3 I **asked Sam to stay**. I **wanted him to wait**, but he **wanted to leave** right away.

Verbs used with gerunds only

After verbs such as *avoid* and *enjoy*, we use gerunds, not infinitives (4). After verbs such as *imagine* and *mind*, we can include a noun or object pronoun before the gerund (5). We put gerunds after verbs with prepositions such as *concentrate on* and after phrasal verbs such as *give up* (6).

- 4 **Avoid eating** cakes and sweets. • We **enjoy travelling** by train. (NOT ~~enjoy to travel~~)
- 5 I **imagined Jenny walking** on a sunny beach. • Would you **mind us waiting** outside?
- 6 He should **concentrate on studying**, not **singing**. • Have you **given up exercising** already?

Verbs used with infinitives or gerunds

After *begin*, *continue*, *intend* and *start*, we can usually use either infinitives or gerunds with little difference in meaning.

- 7 Josh **started to drink/drinking** the soup, but it was very spicy. He **began to cough/coughing**.
We use infinitives after present participles: *Is it starting to rain?* (NOT ~~Is it starting raining?~~)

After *hate*, *like*, *love* and *prefer*, we can usually use infinitives or gerunds with little difference in meaning (8). When we are talking about an activity in general (not performed by the subject), we use a gerund (9). After *would hate/like/love/prefer* we use infinitives (10).

- 8 Katy **loves to play/playing** the piano. • Don't you **prefer to study/studying** at home?
- 9 I **hate wrestling** because it's so violent. It shouldn't be on TV. I don't **like boxing** either.
- 10 **Would you like to come** with us? • I'd **love to see** you tonight. (NOT ~~I'd love seeing you tonight.~~)

Note the use of *would rather* + bare infinitive: *I'd rather stay here.* (NOT ~~I'd rather to stay here.~~)

After *advise*, *allow*, *encourage* and *permit*, we can use a noun or object pronoun as subject of the infinitive. When there is no subject, we use the gerund for an activity in general.

- 11 They don't **allow us to smoke**. • They don't **allow smoking**. (NOT ~~They don't allow us smoking.~~)

After *feel*, *hear*, *see* and *watch*, we can use a noun or object pronoun as subject with a bare infinitive for a single or completed action and with a gerund for a repeated or continuous action.

- 12 When I rang the doorbell, I **heard a dog bark**. • Did you **hear that dog barking** last night?

When there is no subject, we use a gerund: *I also heard shouting.* (NOT ~~I also heard shout.~~)

After *forget*, *regret*, *remember* and *stop*, we use infinitives for actions which will happen later (13) and gerunds for actions which have already happened (14).

- 13 **Remember to take** an umbrella. (when you go out later) • I **regret to say** this. (I'm going to say it)
- 14 Don't you **remember taking** it? (when you left earlier) • I **regret saying** that. (I said it earlier)

After *need*, we often use an infinitive, but we can use a gerund with the same meaning as the passive infinitive (15). We can use *mean* with an infinitive (= intend) or *mean* with a gerund (= result in) (16). We can use *try* with an infinitive (= make an effort) or *try* with a gerund (= experiment with) (17).

- 15 I **need to do** some laundry. • These towels **need washing**. (= These towels **need to be washed**.)
- 16 I **meant to ask** you about your new job. Will it **mean spending** more time away from home?
- 17 I **must try to get** to work on time tomorrow. I think I'll **try setting** my alarm a bit earlier.