

Gerunds & Infinitives

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Grammar Notes

GERUNDS & INFINITIVES

A. Form

Gerunds

A gerund is the *-ing form* of a verb.

- I like **swimming**.
- I don't like **paying** taxes.

Infinitives

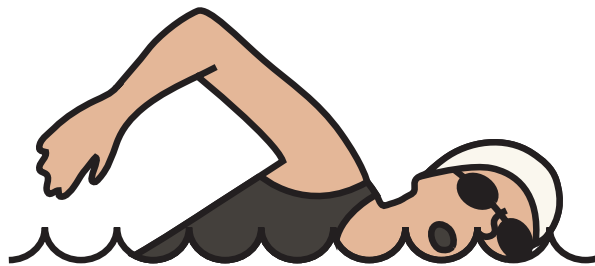
An infinitive is *to + the base form* of a verb.

- I like **to swim**.
- I don't like **to pay** taxes.

B. Function

Gerunds and infinitives combine the action meaning of a **verb** with the grammatical function of a **noun**. They act as nouns (subjects and objects) in a sentence.

- **Speaking** in front of a crowd can be scary. (subject position)
- Do you want **to come** with us? (object position)



Learn to swim by swimming.

—English proverb

Grammar Notes cont.

C. Gerund or Infinitive?

Some sentence positions take only a gerund or only an infinitive, but there is one position (following a verb) where the decision depends on the main verb.

Gerunds			
Position	Pattern	Notes	Examples
subject of a sentence	S = Ger	Gerunds are common in the subject position. While an infinitive is also possible, it is very formal and not common.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping is my favourite hobby. • Working out has really improved my health.
following a preposition	Prep + Ger	Gerunds are also common after a preposition. This rule applies to all prepositions, including ones that are part of phrasal verbs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She thought about <i>calling</i> him but decided she wouldn't. • They are planning on <i>going</i> to the party tonight.
object of a verb	V + Ger	This is the one position where both gerunds and infinitives are commonly used. The choice of which to use depends on the main verb. Some common verbs that are followed by a gerund are <i>advise, avoid, enjoy, finish, practise, quit, and suggest</i> . See the list on page 6 for more of these verbs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He enjoys <i>learning</i> about gerunds. • My teacher suggested <i>studying</i> for the upcoming quiz.

Note #1:

A verb can be in any tense. Progressive tenses use the *-ing* form, so it is possible to see two *-ing* forms side by side (progressive verb + gerund).

- We **are** all **quitting** *smoking* next Friday.
- Michelle **was practising** *juggling* five oranges when I saw her.

Note #2:

Go is often used to describe an activity in English. No matter the tense used, *go* is followed by a gerund.

- She **went** **golfing** last weekend.
- Do you want **to go** **skiing** today?
- We **are going** **sailing** next weekend.

Grammar Notes cont.

C. Gerund or Infinitive? cont.

Infinitives			
Position	Pattern	Notes	Examples
following an adjective	Adj + Inf	Infinitives are common after an adjective. Though it is sometimes possible to use a gerund in this position, it is more common to use an infinitive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is nice <i>to meet</i> you. She mentioned that it was dangerous <i>to stand</i> near that machine.
following a noun or pronoun	N + Inf*	If the verb has an object that is a noun or pronoun, it is almost always followed by an infinitive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You asked me <i>to call</i> you. The doctor advised Mark <i>to eat</i> more vegetables.
object of a verb	V + Inf	This is the one position where both gerunds and infinitives are commonly used. It all depends on the main verb. Some common ones are <i>ask, choose, decide, get, need, plan, promise, and want</i> . See the list on page 6 for more of these verbs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They want <i>to get</i> their tests back as soon as possible. The students are planning <i>to have</i> a party this Friday.

***Note #3:**

The *N + Inf* rule is very handy. For example, the verb "advise" normally takes a gerund, as in "The doctor **advised** *eating* more vegetables." But when there is a noun object, as in "The doctor advised **Mark** *to eat* more vegetables," the infinitive must be used. The noun rule is more important than the verb rule!

Note #4:

Because both gerunds and infinitives keep their verb meanings (even though they function as nouns), they too can have objects. It's common to see a sentence with two or more objects when gerunds or infinitives are used. For example:

- I enjoy **studying** *English*.
"Studying" is the direct object of "enjoy," and "English" is the direct object of "studying."
- My boss asked *me* **to help** *her*.
"Me" is the direct object of "asked," "to help" is also the direct object of "asked," and "her" is the direct object of "to help."

Grammar Notes cont.

C. Gerund or Infinitive? cont.

Note #5:

Some verbs take either a gerund or an infinitive with no change in meaning. Some common verbs are *like*, *love*, and *hate*. See the list on page 6 for more of these verbs.

- I **love** *eating* pasta.
- I **love** *to eat* pasta.

Note #6:

Can gerunds and infinitives be negative? Yes! There are four ways to form negative sentences with gerunds and/or infinitives.

1. **not + main verb + gerund or infinitive**
 - He **didn't want to do** his homework.
 - She **doesn't like studying** after school.
2. **main verb + not + infinitive**
 - They decided **not to go** to the game.
 - We agreed **not to sue** the company.
3. **main verb + to + not + base form** (less common)
 - They decided **to not go** to the game.
 - We agreed **to not sue** the company.
4. **main verb + not + gerund** (not common)
 - She advised **not going out** in the storm.
 - He considered **not applying** for the job.

D. Quick Guide

Gerunds	Infinitives
S = Ger	Adj + Inf
Prep + Ger	N + Inf
V + Ger	V + Inf

Grammar Notes cont.

E. Verb Lists

Common Verbs Followed by a Gerund

- | | | | |
|--------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| • admit | • consider | • finish | • miss |
| • advise | • deny | • imagine | • practise |
| • appreciate | • discuss | • keep | • quit |
| • avoid | • dislike | • mention | • recommend |
| • complete | • enjoy | • mind | • suggest |

Common Verbs Followed by an Infinitive

- | | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| • afford | • expect | • need | • refuse |
| • agree | • hope | • offer | • seem |
| • appear | • intend | • plan | • volunteer |
| • ask | • learn | • prepare | • wait |
| • decide | • mean | • promise | • want |

Common Verbs Followed by a Gerund or an Infinitive (with no meaning change)

- | | | | |
|------------|--------|----------|---------|
| • begin | • hate | • love | • start |
| • continue | • like | • prefer | |

Exercise 1

GERUNDS

Change the text in bold to a gerund.

1. I love to **cook**. _____ *Cooking* _____ is very creative.
2. Kendra **swims** one mile a day because _____ is good for her health.
3. Hebat loves to **watch** movies. _____ movies is her passion.
4. Daniel plans to **study** medicine. _____ medicine is his goal.
5. My teacher loves to **correct** compositions because _____ compositions is fun for him.
6. Dr. Rutigliano **gives** physical examinations on Friday.
_____ these examinations is an important part of her job.
7. It is dangerous to **walk** in that part of town late at night.
_____ in that part of town after dark isn't safe.
8. She usually **drives** over the speed limit. _____ over the limit is against the law.
9. It is against school rules to **fight**. _____ is against school rules.
10. It is wonderful to **live** in an apartment overlooking the ocean.
_____ in this apartment is fantastic.

Exercise 2

INFINITIVES

Write one verb from the Word List on the right in each blank.
There may be more than one correct answer.

1. Barbara _____ *pretended* _____ to be sleeping, but she was really awake.
2. Gina _____ to help out in the soup kitchen.
3. Janice _____ to get a raise next month.
4. The college _____ each student to take English and math.
5. The counsellor _____ Mariam to take all her required courses first.
6. Maria _____ to help John move on Saturday.
7. Do not _____ to call me if you need help.
8. Mark and Karen _____ to get married next June.
9. The coach _____ the players to try their best.
10. Mr. Ng only _____ to take one more course to graduate.

Word List:

- requires
- pretended
- wants
- offered
- hesitate
- advised
- decided
- expects
- encouraged
- needs
- agreed

Exercise 3

GERUNDS & INFINITIVES

Circle the correct answer.

1. Mr. Brown offered _____ us some money.
a) loaning
 b) to loan
2. Chris is considering _____ English for another year.
a) studying
b) to study
3. They volunteered _____ tickets at the fundraiser.
a) selling
b) to sell
4. _____ is my favourite sport.
a) Snowboarding
b) To snowboard
5. Bruce took a second job _____ off his debts.
a) paying
b) to pay
6. It is essential _____ salt to this recipe.
a) adding
b) to add
7. Using a phone card is better for _____ long-distance calls.
a) making
b) to make
8. The children learned _____ to strangers.
a) not talking
b) not to talk
9. Martha thought about _____ to Peru.
a) travelling
b) to travel
10. You can get to the theatre by _____ the bus.
a) taking
b) to take
11. Elizabeth finds it difficult _____ money.
a) saving
b) to save
12. Do you want to go _____ with me tomorrow morning?
a) jogging
b) to jog

Exercise 4

RULES

Review the rules on when to use gerunds and infinitives. See the box to the right or review pages 3 and 4. Then list the rule used in each sentence.

Gerunds	Infinitives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S = Ger • Prep + Ger • V + Ger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adj + Inf • N + Inf • V + Inf

#	Sentence	Rule
Ex	My father wants to retire in two years.	<i>V + Inf</i>
1	Have you thought about becoming a photographer?	
2	We can't afford to buy a new car.	
3	English can be very difficult to learn.	
4	Reading is a hobby every kid should have.	
5	Lee keeps forgetting his homework.	
6	He asked his father to drive him to work.	
7	My parents believe in telling the truth.	
8	Texting while driving is dangerous.	
9	The travel agent suggested going to Europe in May.	
10	Lola advised her sister to apply to more than one university.	
11	It's nice to hear from you.	
12	She seems to need help with the new software.	

Exercise 5

GERUNDS & INFINITIVES

Change the verb in parentheses into the gerund or infinitive form.
When both forms are possible, write them both in the blank.

1. The lawyer wanted _____ with his client.
(meet)
2. Jason needs _____ more.
(study)
3. We love _____ to parties.
(go)
4. Joshua dislikes _____ vegetables.
(eat)
5. Bob avoided _____ the cyclist at the last minute.
(hit)
6. Maurice asked _____ invited.
(be)
7. My friend mentioned _____ puppies for sale.
(have)
8. Hye Jun doesn't like _____ in the rain.
(walk)
9. The teacher encouraged her students _____ their own languages.
(speak, not)
10. It is easy _____ behind in your schoolwork.
(fall)

→

Exercise 5 cont.

11. _____ is a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon.
(shop)
12. Most doctors suggest _____ at least three times a week.
(exercise)
13. For _____ cookies, butter is a better choice than margarine.
(make)
14. Junko and Yosuke enjoy _____ to the beach.
(go)
15. The coach promised _____ the players take a break.
(let)
16. My neighbours decided _____ their house.
(sell, not)
17. _____ is my favourite sport.
(swim)
18. Mario hates _____ in public.
(speak)
19. My grandma always tells me that she misses _____ me.
(see)
20. I like snowboarding, but my cousin prefers _____ .
(ski)
21. The students had to wait _____ their grades.
(receive)
22. Do you mind _____ for a minute or two?
(wait)

Exercise 6

CLASS SURVEY

Create your own class survey! Write eight questions using gerunds and infinitives with the verbs in the Word List. Then ask your classmates these questions, and write their answers on the right. Try to speak to a new classmate for each question.

Word List:

- enjoy
- like
- love
- dislike
- hate

#	Question	Answer
Ex.	What kinds of movies do you enjoy watching?	Paul enjoys watching comedies and action movies.
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

Exercise 8

QUIZ

Circle the correct answer.

1. They want to _____ next weekend.
 - a) go skiing
 - b) go to ski
2. Ashley promised _____ the invitations by tomorrow.
 - a) mailing
 - b) to mail
3. Victor hopes _____ his exam.
 - a) passing
 - b) to pass
4. It is important _____ people back right away.
 - a) calling
 - b) to call
5. The travel agent advised _____ shots before going to a tropical destination.
 - a) getting
 - b) to get
6. Do you think it is easy _____ rice?
 - a) making
 - b) to make
7. _____ attention when you are really tired is difficult.
 - a) Paying
 - b) To pay
8. The Smiths put off _____ their broken roof until their kitchen flooded.
 - a) fixing
 - b) to fix
9. Nicole decided _____ tonight.
 - a) not going out
 - b) not to go out
10. John finished _____ the book I lent him.
 - a) reading
 - b) to read
11. It's too far _____ to the museum.
 - a) walking
 - b) to walk
12. Our teacher advised us _____ before the big test.
 - a) studying
 - b) to study

Answer Key

Exercise 1

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1. Cooking | 5. correcting | 9. Fighting |
| 2. swimming | 6. Giving | 10. Living |
| 3. Watching | 7. Walking | |
| 4. Studying | 8. Driving | |

Exercise 2

Answers may vary.

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. pretended | 5. advised | 9. encouraged |
| 2. offered | 6. agreed | 10. needs |
| 3. expects | 7. hesitate | |
| 4. requires | 8. decided | |

Exercise 3

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. b | 5. b | 7. a | 9. a | 11. b |
| 2. a | 4. a | 6. b | 8. b | 10. a | 12. a |

Exercise 4

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Prep + Ger | 5. V + Ger | 9. V + Ger |
| 2. V + Inf | 6. N + Inf | 10. N + Inf |
| 3. Adj + Inf | 7. Prep + Ger | 11. Adj + Inf |
| 4. S = Ger | 8. S = Ger | 12. V + Inf |

Exercise 5

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. to meet | 12. exercising |
| 2. to study | 13. making |
| 3. going / to go | 14. going |
| 4. eating | 15. to let |
| 5. hitting | 16. not to sell |
| 6. to be | 17. Swimming |
| 7. having | 18. speaking / to speak |
| 8. walking / to walk | 19. seeing |
| 9. not to speak | 20. skiing |
| 10. to fall | 21. to receive |
| 11. Shopping | 22. waiting |

Exercise 6

Answers will vary.

Exercise 7

Answers will vary.

Exercise 8

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. a | 3. b | 5. a | 7. a | 9. b | 11. b |
| 2. b | 4. b | 6. b | 8. a | 10. a | 12. b |

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Verb Cards

There are many ways to use these cards. One idea is to put students into small groups, cut up the verb cards from all three lists, and give each group one shuffled set of cards. Students can take turns choosing a card and saying if it should be followed by a gerund, an infinitive, or both. If the student gets it right, he/she may keep the card; otherwise, he/she must return it to the pile. The winner is the student with the most cards at the end.

EDITOR'S NOTES:

1. See *Gerunds & Infinitives: Grammar Rules* and *Gerunds & Infinitives: Verb Lists* in our Grammar & Usage Resource section for a summary of the main uses and verb lists:
<https://esllibrary.com/resources/2261>
<https://esllibrary.com/resources/2259>
2. The verbs *try*, *stop*, *forget*, *remember*, and *regret* can be followed by a gerund or an infinitive, but the meaning of the verb changes. To introduce these challenging verbs to higher-level students, see *Gerunds & Infinitives: Meaning Changes* in our Grammar & Usage Resource section:
<https://esllibrary.com/resources/2260>
3. This answer key reflects the rules taught on pages 3–5. Feel free to point out to students when another choice sounds natural enough. (E.g., Exercise 8, #6, [b] is the best choice, but [a] is also possible.)

Verb Cards

GERUNDS & INFINITIVES

A. Common Verbs Followed by a Gerund

admit	advise	appreciate	avoid
complete	consider	deny	discuss
dislike	enjoy	finish	imagine
keep	mention	mind	miss
practise	quit	recommend	suggest

Verb Cards cont.

B. Common Verbs Followed by an Infinitive

afford	agree	appear	ask
decide	expect	hope	intend
learn	mean	need	offer
plan	prepare	promise	refuse
seem	volunteer	wait	want

C. Common Verbs Followed by a Gerund *or* an Infinitive

begin	continue	hate	like
love	prefer	start	