11

Gerunds, Infinitives, and Verb Patterns

When one verb follows another, English forces a choice: *enjoy* ***doing***, *decide* ***to do***, *let someone* ***do***. These patterns must largely be memorized, but there are useful regularities.

11.1 The gerund (*-ing* form as a noun)

A gerund behaves like a noun and can be a subject, object, or complement:

- Subject: ***Swimming*** *is good exercise.* ***Being*** *punctual matters here.*
- After prepositions — always the gerund: *She's good* ***at drawing***. *He left* ***without saying*** *goodbye. I'm looking forward* ***to seeing*** *you. We're used* ***to getting*** *up early.*
- After certain verbs (see below): *I enjoy* ***cooking***.

Common Error

to is sometimes a preposition, not part of an infinitive — then it takes the gerund: *look forward* ***to meeting***, *be used* ***to driving***, *object* ***to paying***, *commit(ted)* ***to improving***. ✗ *I look forward to hear from you.* → ✓ *I look forward to hearing from you.*

11.2 Verbs followed by the gerund

admit, avoid, can't help, can't stand, consider, delay, deny, discuss, dislike, enjoy, fancy, finish, give up, imagine, involve, keep (on), mention, mind, miss, postpone, practise, put off, recommend, resent, risk, suggest

He ***admitted taking*** *the money. Would you* ***mind opening*** *the window? I* ***can't help laughing***. *She* ***suggested going*** *by train.*

Common Error

✗ *She suggested to go by train.* → ✓ *She suggested going by train.* / ✓ *She suggested that we (should) go by train.*
✗ *I enjoyed to meet them.* → ✓ *I enjoyed meeting them.*

11.3 Verbs followed by the *to*-infinitive

afford, agree, appear, arrange, ask, choose, decide, demand, deserve, expect, fail, help, hesitate, hope, learn, manage, offer, plan, prepare, pretend, promise, refuse, seem, tend, threaten, want, would like

We ***decided to stay***. *She* ***refused to answer***. *They* ***can't afford to move***. *He* ***seems to know*** *everyone.*

11.3.1 Verb + object + *to*-infinitive

advise, allow, ask, encourage, expect, forbid, force, invite, order, permit, persuade, remind, teach, tell, want, warn: *They **invited us to join** them. I **reminded him to lock** up. She **wants me to call** her.*

Common Error

✗ *I want that you come early.* → ✓ *I want you to come early.* (*want* never takes a *that*-clause)

11.4 The bare infinitive

- After modals: *You must **go**.*
- After *make* and *let* + object: *They **made** us **wait**. **Let** me **explain**.* (but passive: *We were made **to wait***)
- After *help*, both work: *She helped me (to) move.*
- Perception verbs *see, hear, watch, feel, notice* + object: bare infinitive for a complete event, *-ing* for one in progress: *I **saw him cross** the road* (whole action) vs. *I **saw him crossing** the road* (in the middle of it).

11.5 Verbs taking either form

11.5.1 Little or no change of meaning

begin, start, continue, like, love, hate, prefer: *It started to rain / raining.* (After *would like/love*, only the infinitive: *I'd like **to see** the menu.*)

11.5.2 Change of meaning

	+ gerund	+ to-infinitive
remember	past action remembered: *I remember **locking** the door.*	duty to do next: *Remember **to lock** the door.*
forget	*I'll never forget **seeing** the Taj Mahal.*	*Don't forget **to buy** milk.*
stop	quit an activity: *He stopped **smoking**.*	pause in order to do: *He stopped **to smoke**.*
try	experiment: *Try **restarting** the router.*	attempt something difficult: *I tried **to open** the jar, but couldn't.*
regret	be sorry about the past: *I regret **saying** that.*	formal bad news: *We regret **to inform** you. . .*
mean	involve: *The new job means **moving** to Leeds.*	intend: *I meant **to call** you.*
go on	continue same activity: *She went on **talking**.*	change to a new activity: *She went on **to become** CEO.*

11.6 Infinitive of purpose

Use *to* + verb (or *in order to* / *so as to*, more formal) to express purpose: *I went out **to get** some air. She trains daily **in order to stay** fit. He left early **so as not to miss** the train.* ✗ *I came here for to see you. / for seeing you.* → ✓ *I came here to see you.*

Exercises

Exercise 11.1 Gerund or infinitive?

Put the verb in brackets into the correct form.

1. I don't mind _____ (wait), but I refuse _____ (queue) for more than an hour.
2. She agreed _____ (help) us _____ (organize) the event.
3. Have you finished _____ (write) the report?
4. He denied _____ (break) the window.
5. We're looking forward to _____ (hear) from you.
6. They made us _____ (show) our ID cards.

Exercise 11.2 Meaning pairs

Explain the difference between the sentences in each pair.

1. (a) He stopped drinking coffee. (b) He stopped to drink a coffee.
2. (a) I remember posting the letter. (b) I must remember to post the letter.
3. (a) Try talking to her. (b) Try to talk to her.
4. (a) I saw the children play in the garden. (b) I saw the children playing in the garden.

Exercise 11.3 Error correction

Correct one error in each sentence.

1. I suggested to take a taxi.
2. She wants that her son studies medicine.
3. He left without to say goodbye.
4. I'm used to drive on the left now.
5. My parents let me to stay out late.
6. Avoid to travel during rush hour.