Verb Patterns

An Upper-Intermediate Grammar Worksheet from Anna Grammar™

Some verbs must be followed by to-infinitive. Others are followed by the gerund (base verb+ing).

You need to learn what different verbs do.

The infinitive after a verb

Some verbs are followed by to-infinitive.

* appear - They appeared to enjoy the movie.

Here is a list of other verbs that do this:

* decide (not to) - I decided not to visit the snake pits.
* expect (don't expect to) - He expected to find lots of snakes. / He didn't expect to stand on a snake!
* forget (don't forget to) - I forgot to bring my camera. / Don't forget to send me a postcard of the snakes.
* learn (learn not to) - We must learn not to cut down so many trees.
* manage (manage not to) - He managed to escape from the flooding river.
* pretend (not to) - I pretended to like his snakes, but really I dislike any reptile!
* promise (not to) - She promised to come back next year. / He promised not to go there alone. (i.e. 'that he wouldn't')
* refuse - She refused to listen to me.

The gerund after a verb

Some verbs are followed by the gerund.

* enjoy - I enjoy working for WWF because I know I am helping animals in different countries.

Here is a list of other verbs that do this:

* admit - I admit cutting down the trees. I had to do it.
* avoid - I avoid meeting her whenever I can.
* can't help - I can't help worrying about Andrew. The weather is really awful and he is out in his boat.
* escape - I escape talking to boring people at parties by telling them that I collect spiders.
* face - Can you face tidying your room?
* imagine - I can't imagine working in a rainforest. There'd be no shops!
* mind - Would you mind waiting here while I get my phone?
* mention - She mentioned going to Madagascar five times. She wants everyone to know about it!
* suggest - I suggested taking a taxi, but they disagreed.

The gerund after prepositions

A gerund often comes after a verb + preposition, an adjective + preposition or a noun + a preposition.

* I believe in saving rainforests!
* I apologize for being late.
* I'm interested in learning more about snakes.
* I'm worried about going to Africa next year.
* I'm not very good at using computers.
* I think it's a matter of plugging the computer in.
Verb + object + gerund

* I hate people thinking I'm stupid!

Here are some verbs that take an object + gerund.

* avoid, can't help, love, miss, stop, tolerate, understand

* I can't help women admiring me!

* Please stop her waving that gun around!

Verbs that take either the to-infinitive or the gerund with no difference in meaning.

the verb, start.

* They have started replanting trees in Madagascar.

* They have started to replant trees in Madagascar.

Other verbs that are like this:

* begin, bother, cease, continue, intend, like*, love, prefer

*Sometimes with verbs of liking and hating, the gerund helps suggest the action is really happening.

* I hate cutting down more trees but I must clear land for my family.

The to-infinitive can suggest something more hypothetical.

* I'd hate to cut down more trees. Luckily, I don't have to.

The verb like takes a to-infinitive when something is a good or sensible idea, rather than something you really enjoy.

* I like to eat healthy food.

When we are talking about future preferences or wishes, we use would + like + to-infinitive.

* I would like to visit Madagascar.

* I would love to have a lemur as a pet.

Some verbs that take an infinitive or a gerund, but with different meanings:

try + infinitive has the ordinary meaning of make an effort or attempt to do something:

* Try to help me think of an answer, please!

try + gerund has an experimental sense:

* I'm worried about erosion near the river. Try planting more trees. (It may work. It might solve the problem.)

remember and forget + infinitive is used when we talk about a necessary action and whether we do them.

* Did he remember to post that check?

* Don't forget to phone your brother.

remember and forget + gerund is used when we talk about memories.


* She never forgot visiting Madagascar. It was a special vacation for her.

regret + infinitive used for a present action when we give bad news.

* I regret to inform you that your application has been unsuccessful.

regret + gerund used when we want to say we regret something in the past.

* I regret staying at home instead of traveling when I was younger. Now I am too old to go anywhere!

stop + infinitive is often the infinitive of purpose.

* I stopped to take some photos. (The reason I stopped was to take photos.)

stop + gerund is used when we mean to end an action.

* Stop daydreaming and start working!
Exercise 1:
Complete the sentences below with the correct form:

1. Amy, **stop to watch/watching** TV and come here now!
2. She **stopped to breathe/breathing** in the clean fresh air and listen to the birds.
3. After walking through the trees for some time, we **stopped to look/looking** at a kiwi. It was very exciting!
4. I remember **to tell/telling** the conference delegates that we needed to plant trees. They didn't listen to me!
5. Have a good trip. Please remember **to send/sending** me a postcard.
6. We remembered **to stay/staying** on the paths and not touch anything.
7. Try **to think/thinking** before you answer next time. You should think first and then speak!
8. I don't know if this will help me lose weight but I will **try to drink/drinking** a glass of water before eating.

Answer Key:
Exercise 1:
1. watching, 2. to breathe, 3. to look, 4. telling, 5. to send, 6. to stay, 7. to think, 8. drinking.