-ING FORM OR TO-INFINITIVE?

• Introduction

The -ing form of the verb may be a gerund or a present participle. If it is a gerund, it functions as a noun and it is usually translated into a Spanish “infinitive”. If it is a present participle, it functions as a verb and it is usually translated into a Spanish “gerundio”.

Driving very fast is extremely dangerous.
He was sleeping when I phoned.

Grammatically there are two types of infinitive, to-infinitive and bare infinitive.
I want to go.
He cannot come.

• AFTER PREPOSITIONS we use -ing forms.

I ran ten miles without stopping.
I read for a while before going to sleep.
I am tired of waiting for you.

Note: To may be a preposition as in (i) or may be part of the infinitive as in (ii).
(i) I am used to getting up early.
     I am looking forward to seeing you again.
(ii) I used to get up early.
     We decided to go out.

• AFTER ADJECTIVES we use to-infinitive.

That is difficult to do.
They were quick to react.

• As A SUBJECT we commonly use -ing forms. Smoking is bad for your health.
Watching television is a waste of time.

Note: To-infinitive is sometimes used as a subject in more formal speech, e.g. for quotes and definitions.
To see is to believe.
To chew means to masticate.

• AFTER VERBS

1. With some verbs we use -ing forms.

He suggested going to the cinema.
I dislike studying.
They admitted stealing the money.

admit avoid consider deny dislike enjoy fancy
feel like finish give up go on imagine involve can (not) help
keep mind practise resist risk suggest not stand

2. With other verbs we use to-infinitive.

I learned to drive last year.
I promised not to be late.
We decided to go to the party.

afford agree attempt decide expect fail
help hope intend learn manage need
offer plan prepare pretend promise propose
refuse seem want wish would like
3. There are also some verbs that can be either followed by -ing forms or by to-infinitives.

It has started to rain / raining.
I hate not going out / not to go out at weekends.

begin / start  continue  hate  like  love  prefer

4. There are a few verbs that may be followed by -ing forms or by to-infinitives, but with a change in meaning.

REMEMBER  Please, remember to lock the door. (Remember something that you have to do)
The witness did not remember locking the door. (Remember sth that you did)

TRY  tried to learn German, but it was too difficult. (you see if you can do it)
I couldn`t sleep, so I tried having some hot milk. (you see what happens as a result)

STOP  On the way home he stopped to have a drink. (in order to have a drink)
I stopped reading when my parents arrived. (the action of reading was interrupted)

REGRET  I regret to tell you that you have failed the exam. (I regret to have to tell you)
I regret having shouted at you. (I regret something that happened in the past)

FORGET  He forgot to tell me. (He forgot something that he had to do)
I`ll never forget seeing my daughter dance in public for the first time. (I´ll never forget something that happened in the past)

5. Some verbs are used in the structure verb + personal object + to-infinitive.

I want you to come with me.
She advised me to apply for the job.
They told us not to smoke.

advise  allow  ask  enable  encourage  expect
forbid  force  help  invite  order  permit
persuade  prefer  recommend  remind  teach  tell
want  warn  would like

6. Finally, some verbs are used in the structure verb + personal object + bare infinitive.

LET  Let her talk.
MAKE  I made them give me the money back.
SEE  I didn´t see you come in.
HEAR  I heard her say that she was fed up.
FEEL  Did you feel the earth move?