

# -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  
feel like  
keep

avoid  
finish  
mind

consider  
give up  
practise

deny  
go on  
resist

dislike  
imagine  
risk

enjoy  
involve  
suggest

fancy  
can (not) help  
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  
help  
offer  
refuse

agree  
hope  
plan  
seem

attempt  
intend  
prepare  
want

decide  
learn  
pretend  
wish

expect  
manage  
promise  
would like

fail  
need  
propose

### 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?