

English VI

Introduction to Gerunds and Infinitives

MENG321 - 2022

Zachary Chui – Room A323

zchui@ipm.edu.mo

Lesson 1

Gerunds

A gerund is a noun made from a verb. To make a gerund, you add "-ing" to the verb.

For example:

In the sentence "I swim every day", the word "swim" is a **verb**.

In the sentence "I like swimming", the word "swimming" is a **noun**.

Therefore, "swimming" is a gerund.

Gerunds

Another example:

In the sentence "She reads several books a week", the word "read" is a **verb**.

In the sentence "Reading is important", the word "reading" is a **noun**.

Therefore, "reading" is a gerund.

Gerunds

More examples of gerunds: buying, fishing, running, watching, telling, and so forth.

The word "gerund" actually comes from the Latin word gerere, which means "do".

Therefore: the gerund describes an action, something you do.

Gerunds are often used when actions are real or completed.

Gerunds

Examples: Note how the main underlined verb relates to real or completed actions.

She stopped **smoking**.

I finished **doing** my homework.

They keep on **fighting**.

We discussed **moving** to another city.

You recommended **waiting** until tomorrow.

Infinitives

An infinitive is the basic form of the verb + "to".

Examples: to buy, to fish, to run, to tell, and so forth.

Example Sentences:

"I want to swim."

"They asked us to leave."

"The goal is to win."

Infinitives

The word "infinitive" comes from the Latin word *infinitus*, from *in-* (not) and *finitus* (finished, limited).

Therefore: the infinitive describes an action, but unlike a regular verb, it is not limited in any way.

Infinitives

The regular verb is limited to the tense and subject. For example, in the sentence "Diana danced all night" the action is limited to Diana and to the past.

However, the infinitive is unlimited. In the sentence "To dance is easy", the action is not limited to any subject or to any time.

Infinitives are often used when actions are unreal, general, or future.

Infinitives

Examples: Note how the main underlined verb relates to unreal, general, or future actions.

Kate agreed **to come**.

I hope **to see** you soon.

We plan **to finish** this shortly.

They decided **to return** home.

I want **to drink** coffee.

Gerunds and Infinitives

The basic difference between gerunds and infinitives is:

Using a gerund suggests that you are referring to real activities or experiences.

Using an infinitive suggests that you are talking about potential or possible activities or experiences.

Gerunds and Infinitives

So let's say you eat ice cream every day. This is an actual action you are doing. Then you could say: "I like eating ice cream".

On the other hand, if you are on a diet, and you don't usually eat ice cream, then you are talking about a potential action. You could say: "I like to eat ice cream."

Gerunds and Infinitives

When used before the main verb, gerunds tend to sound more like natural English.

For example, the sentence "Playing tennis is a lot of fun" sounds more natural than "To play tennis is a lot of fun". The second sentence sounds more theoretical.

Gerunds and Infinitives

The main verb in the sentence determines whether you use a gerund or an infinitive.

Some verbs take only a gerund, while some verbs take only an infinitive.

Some verbs can take both gerunds and infinitives, with only a slight difference in the meaning.

A few verbs take both gerunds and infinitives, but with a significant difference in the meaning.

Gerunds and Infinitives

A few verbs take both gerunds and infinitives, but with a difference in the meaning:

regret

She regrets **quitting** her job.

(She has quit her job, and now she regrets it.)

She regrets **to quit** her job.

(She is sorry to have to quit her job.)

Gerunds and Infinitives

A few verbs take both gerunds and infinitives, but with a difference in the meaning:

stop

He stopped **talking**.

(He was talking, but then he stopped.)

He stopped **to talk**.

(He was doing something else, but he stopped in order to talk.)