

Verb patterns

When we put two verbs together in a sentence, the form of the second verb depends on the first.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to decide which verbs, are followed by *-ing* forms ('gerund'), and which are followed by infinitives.

Common verbs followed by the *-ing* form

- ADORE
- AVOID
- CAN'T HELP
- CAN'T STAND
- DESCRIBE
- DON'T MIND
- ENJOY
- FANCY
- FINISH
- GIVE UP
- IMAGINE
- KEEP
- MENTION
- MISS
- PRACTISE
- RECOMMEND
- SPEND (TIME/MONEY)
- SUGGEST

- ❖ I enjoy travelling.
- ❖ She's given up smoking.
- ❖ I can't stand waiting.
- ❖ I enjoy not getting up early at the weekend*.

*Negative form: not + *-ing*

Common verbs followed by to + infinitive

- AGREE
- ARRANGE
- ASK
- CAN'T AFFORD
- CHOOSE
- DECIDE
- EXPECT
- FAIL
- HOPE
- INTEND
- LEARN
- MANAGE
- NEED
- OFFER
- PLAN
- PRETEND
- PROMISE
- REFUSE
- SEEM
- THREATEN
- WANT
- WOULD LIKE
- WOULD LOVE
- WOULD PREFER

- ❖ I hope to see you later.
- ❖ It seems to be a good destination.
- ❖ I promise not to be late*.

*Negative form: not + to + infinitive.

N.B.!

Common verbs followed by both the to + infinitive and *-ing* form, with no difference in meaning:

- BEGIN
- CONTINUE
- HATE
- LIKE
- LOVE
- PREFER
- START

- ❖ I began reading that book/I began to read that book.
- ❖ I prefer staying at home/to stay at home etc.
- ❖ I started to play/playing violin when I was 10.
- ❖ Etc.

N.B.! (2)

Some verbs can also be followed by an infinitive, but the meaning is different: *forget, regret, remember, stop, try*.

He tried to do it in a different way. (he attempted it, but we don't know if he did it)

He tried doing it in a different way. (he actually tested a different method, but we don't know if the new method was any better or worse)

After common phrases

The -ing form follows some common phrases.

It's worth getting a book about the country before you go.

I play the guitar as well as playing the saxophone.

It's no good/use crying. It won't change anything.

There's no point waiting because he's not coming.

Let's take the car instead of walking in the rain.

I can't help laughing whenever I see that film.

After a few years of travelling by tube, I'm used to people ignoring each other.

Other uses (1)

- ▶ A gerund (*-ing* form) can be used, just like a noun, as the subject or complement of a verb.
- ❖ Travelling can be very educational (subject)
- ❖ My favourite activity is reading thrillers (object)*

*the *-ing* form may be used like a noun, but it is still a verb and can have its own object.

- ❖ E.g. I hate packing suitcases.

Other uses (2)

- ▶ We also use the *-ing* form when a verb follows a preposition.
- ❖ I'm usually good at finding cheap hotels.
- ❖ We often think about travelling for a year.
- ❖ They painted the house instead of going on holiday.

Other uses (3)

- ▶ We often use to + infinitive after an adjective.
- ❖ It was amazing to visit Brazil for the first time.
- ❖ (I'm) glad to meet you.
- ❖ I am happy to see you.
- ❖ I was relieved to take off my shoes.