

# Grammar Reference

## Verb patterns

### Verbs with infinitives, gerunds (verb-ing), and that-clauses

#### Meaning and use

With some verbs, especially those that explain, report or warn, after the main verb, you can sometimes use **that**, sometimes **a gerund (verb-ing form)**, other times **an infinitive (with to)**, and other times, **either a gerund or an infinitive**. Sentences that make promises, warnings, offers, suggestions or recommendations use these verb structures.

*My teacher **advised us to study** two hours a day.* (advise + infinitive)

*The bookstore **recommended buying** an English-English dictionary.* (recommend + verb-ing)

*Judith **promises to attend** the school concert.* (promise + infinitive)

Toby **told me that** he was going to France on holiday. (tell + that + independent clause)

In addition, some of these verbs need an object, usually a person or people.

*The police **warned us not to enter** the building.*

*The speaker **invited the audience to ask** questions.*

The best way to learn which of these verbs take 'that', infinitives, gerunds, or both, is to notice them when you read, or to use grammar references. Here is a list of some of the most common patterns. Remember that an independent clause has a subject and a verb.

#### discuss

discuss + gerund

*The band **discussed playing** at the new pub.*

#### explain

explain + that + independent clause

*The reporter **explained that** the storm may cause flooding.*

#### invite

invite + someone + to-infinitive

*My cousin **invited me to go** to a movie.*

#### offer

offer + to-infinitive

*The bank **offered to give** the clerk his own desk.*

#### suggest

1) suggest + gerund

*Jason **suggested seeing** Romeo and Juliet *this weekend*.*

2) suggest + that + independent clause

*May I **suggest that** you not buy a new car *this year*?*

#### recommend

1) recommend + gerund

*My doctor **recommends eating** fresh fruit every day.*

2) recommend + that + independent clause

*We **recommend that** you buy your tickets *early*.*

#### ask

1) ask + to-infinitive

*I **asked to attend** the meeting.*

2) ask + someone + to-infinitive

*Sharon **asked her manager to change** her hours.*

3) ask + that + independent clause

*Annie **asked that we phone** her *after nine in the morning*.*

#### propose

1) propose + to-infinitive

*The president **proposed to study** the idea.*

2) propose + that + independent clause

*Do you **propose that** we end *this program*?*

#### tell

1) tell + someone + to-infinitive

*My grandfather **told us not to argue**.*

2) tell + that + independent clause

*My friends **told me that** I could join them *at the pub*.*

#### warn

1) warn + someone + to-infinitive

*The firefighter **warned the man not to go near** the fire.*

2) warn + that + independent clause

*We are often **warned that** cigarettes are bad *for our health*.*

#### promise

1) promise + someone + to-infinitive

*I **promised my father to do** my best *always*.*

2) promise + infinitive

*Mark **has promised to take** his grandson *to a football game*.*

3) promise + that

*We **promise that** we will finish *in time*.*

#### advise

1) advise + someone + to-infinitive

*Mr Brown **advised her to take** the geometry course.*

2) advise + gerund

*The scientist **advised performing** another experiment.*

3) advise + that + independent clause

*The doctor **advised that we get** a flu shot *every year*.*

#### Form

You can notice from the table that **discuss**, **explain**, **invite** and **offer** each can be combined with only one verb form, either an infinitive, gerund, or that + independent clause. **Advise**, **ask**, and **promise** can be combined with three options. The rest of these verbs can be combined with two different choices. Here is a chart showing these choices.

Negative

When using negative forms with the infinitive, **not** goes before the **to** part of the verb.

We were **warned not to** miss the last train of the evening.

For negatives with gerunds or that + independent clauses, the **not** goes before the gerund or infinitive part of the phrase.

My coach **recommends not eating** before practice.

The taxi driver **asked that we not smoke** in the taxi.

Question

Did the manager **suggest selling** the new product at the market?

When did Maurice **promise to** telephone in the morning?

Take note: prepositions

Be careful not to confuse the **to** used in an infinitive with the preposition **to**.

We **propose to finish** by December. (*propose to* = *intend to*)

Stephen **proposed to** Nora over dinner. (*propose to* = *ask to marry*)

Dr Jacobson **invited his students to hear** a special lecture. (*invite someone to hear* = *ask someone to listen*)

We would like to **invite you to** a party on Saturday. (*invite someone to* = *ask someone to come*)

Spoken English

The pronunciation of **to** with infinitives is often unstressed, sounding like /tə/ (ə = ‘uh’).

The final **g** sound of the **-ing** of a gerund is sometimes not pronounced, or pronounced very quietly.