

Definition:

Gerunds and infinitives are verb forms that can take the place of a noun in a sentence. The following guidelines and lists will help you figure out whether a gerund or infinitive is needed.

Following a verb (gerund or infinitive)

Both gerunds and infinitives can replace a noun as the object of a verb. Whether you use a gerund or an infinitive depends on the main verb in the sentence. Consult the lists below to find out which form to use following which verbs.

Examples:

*I expect **to have** the [INFINITIVE]
report done by Friday.*

*I anticipate **having** the [GERUND]
report done by Friday.*

*Some common verbs followed by a gerund (note that phrasal verbs, marked here with *, always fall into this category):*

Acknowledge *She acknowledged **receiving** assistance.*

*** accuse of** *He was accused
of **smuggling** contraband goods.*

Admit *They admitted **falsifying** the data.*

Advise *The author advises **undertaking** further
study.*

anticipate *He anticipates **having** trouble with his*

supervisor.

appreciate I appreciated **having** a chance to read your draft.

Avoid He avoided **answering** my question.

complete I finally completed **writing** my thesis.

consider They will consider **granting** you money.

Defer She deferred **writing** her report.

Delay We delayed **reporting** the results until we were sure.

Deny They denied **copying** the information.

discuss They discussed **running** the experiments again.

entail This review procedure entails **repeating** the test.

*** look after** He will look after **mailing** the tickets.

*** insist on** He insisted on **proofreading** the article again.

involve This procedure involves **testing** each sample twice.

justify My results justify **taking** drastic action.

mention The author mentions **seeing** this event.

*** plan on** They had planned on **attending** the conference.

postpone The committee has

postponed **writing** the report.

recall I cannot recall **getting** those results before.

resent He resented **spending** so much time on the project.

recommend She recommends **reading** Marx.

resist The writer resists **giving** any easy answers.

Risk She risks **losing** her viewing time.

sanction They will not sanction **copying** without permission.

suggest I suggest **repeating** the experiment.

*** take care of** He will take care of **sending** it to you.

tolerate She can't tolerate **waiting** for results.

Some common verbs followed by an infinitive:

afford We cannot afford **to hesitate**.

agree The professors agreed **to disagree**.

appear The results appear **to support** your theory.

arrange They had arranged **to meet** at noon.

beg	<i>I beg to differ with you.</i>
care	<i>Would you care to respond?</i>
claim	<i>She claims to have new data.</i>
consent	<i>Will you consent to run for office?</i>
decide	<i>When did he decide to withdraw?</i>
demand	<i>I demand to see the results of the survey.</i>
deserve	<i>She deserves to have a fair hearing.</i>
expect	<i>The committee expects to decide by tomorrow.</i>
fail	<i>The trial failed to confirm his hypothesis.</i>
hesitate	<i>I hesitate to try the experiment again.</i>
hope	<i>What do you hope to accomplish?</i>
learn	<i>We have learned to proceed with caution.</i>
manage	<i>How did she manage to find the solution?</i>

neglect *The author neglected **to provide** an index.*

need *Do we need **to find** new subjects?*

offer *We could offer **to change** the time of the meeting.*

plan *They had planned **to attend** the conference.*

prepare *He was not prepared **to give** a lecture.*

pretend *I do not pretend **to know** the answer.*

promise *They promise **to demonstrate** the new equipment.*

refuse *She refused **to cooperate** any longer.*

seem *Something seems **to be** wrong with your design.*

struggle *We struggled **to understand** her point of view.*

swear *He swears **to tell** the truth.*

threaten The team threatened **to stop** their research.

volunteer Will you volunteer **to lead** the group?

wait We could not wait **to hear** the outcome.

want She did not want **to go** first.

wish Do you wish **to participate**?

Following a preposition (gerund only)

Gerunds can follow a preposition; infinitives cannot.

Can you touch your toes without **bending** your knees?

He was fined for **driving** over the speed limit.

She got the money by **selling** the car.

A corkscrew is a tool for **taking** corks out of bottles.

Note: Take care not to confuse the preposition “to” with an infinitive form, or with an auxiliary form such as have to, used to, going to

Examples:

He went [PREPOSITION
back to **writing** his + GERUND]
paper.

I used to **live** in [AUXILIARY +
Mexico. VERB]

I want **to go** home. [VERB +

INFINITIVE]

Following an indirect object (infinitive only)

Some verbs are followed by a pronoun or noun referring to a person, and then an infinitive. Gerunds cannot be used in this position.

Some common verbs followed by an indirect object plus an infinitive:

- Ask** *I must ask you **to reconsider** your statement.*
- Beg** *They begged her **to stay** for another term.*
- cause** *His findings caused him **to investigate** further.*
- challenge** *Wilkins challenged Watson **to continue** the research.*
- convince** *Can we convince them **to fund** our study?*
- encourage** *She encouraged him **to look** beyond the obvious.*
- expect** *They did not expect us **to win** an award.*
- forbid** *The author forbade me **to change** his wording.*
- force** *They cannot force her **to reveal** her sources.*
- hire** *Did the department hire him **to***

teach the new course?

instruct I will instruct her **to prepare** a handout.

invite We invite you **to attend** the ceremony.

need They need her **to show** the slides.

order He ordered the group **to leave** the building.

persuade Can we persuade you **to contribute** again?

remind Please remind him **to check** the references.

require They will require you **to submit** an outline.

teach We should teach them **to follow** standard procedures.

Tell Did she tell him **to make** three copies?

urge I urge you **to read** the instructions before you begin.

want I do not want you **to have** an accident.

warn Why didn't they warn me **to turn** down the heat?

Here is a brief review of the differences between gerunds and infinitives.

Gerunds are formed with **ING**.

walking, talking, thinking, listening

Infinitives are formed with **TO**.

to walk, to talk, to think, to listen

Jobs

Gerunds and infinitives can do several jobs:

Both gerunds and infinitives can be the **subject of a sentence**.

Writing in English is difficult.

To write in English is difficult.

Both gerunds and infinitives can be the object of a verb.

I like **writing** in English.

I like **to write** in English.

But... **only gerunds** can be the **object of a preposition**.

We are talking about **writing** in English.

Usage

It is often difficult to know when to use a gerund and when to use an infinitive. These guidelines may help you.

Gerunds

Gerunds are often used when actions are **real, concrete, or completed**.
For example: I stopped **smoking**.

	<i>(The smoking was real and happened until I stopped.)</i>
<i>Infinitives</i>	<i>Infinitives are often used when actions are unreal, abstract, or future.</i> <i>For example: I stopped to smoke.</i> <i>(I was doing something else, and I stopped; the smoking had not happened yet.)</i>