

Infinitive or Gerund

Some verbs can be followed by either the gerund or infinitive *with no difference or only a small difference in meaning*:

- like, love, hate prefer

My Dad **likes to bake / baking** cakes.

Helen prefers **to make / making** her own clothes.

⇒ no difference

After would the infinitive is normally used.

Would you like to go for a walk?

We'd love to hear from you.

I'd hate to miss the chance.

- begin, start

It **began to rain / raining** when we left the cinema.

It has **started to snow / snowing**.

⇒ no difference

After the progressive form of a verb, only the infinitive is used.

It's beginning to get dark.

Some verbs can be followed by either the gerund or infinitive, but with a difference in meaning:

- remember, forget, regret

I don't **remember seeing** you at the party. Were you there?

I'll never **forget flying** over the Alps for the first time.

He **regrets stealing** the money now.

⇒ refer to actions or events that happened earlier

I **remembered to lock** the door when I left.

I remembered that I had to lock the door and so I locked it

Remember to call Aunt Liz.

Don't **forget to feed** the cat, will you?

⇒ refer to a necessary action

I **regret to say** I lost my temper with him.

We **regret to inform** you that your flight has been delayed.

Mr Brown **regrets to tell** you that he is unable to see you today.

- stop

When **stop** is followed by a **gerund** it means to finish an action:

I really must stop smoking.

Could you stop shouting?

When **stop** is followed by an **infinitive** it means to make a break in order to do something else

Every half hour I stop to smoke a cigarette.

We had to stop walking to look at the map.

- **go on**

+ **-ing** = continue what one has been doing

How long do you intend to go on playing those records?

+ **infinitive** = change; move on to something new

He welcomed the new students and then went on to explain the college regulations.

- **see, watch, hear**

+ **-ing** = we observe part of a complete action; when we start looking/listening it is already going on

When I walked past his house I heard him practising the violin.

When I glanced out of the window I saw Mary crossing the road.

+ **infinitive** = we want to suggest that we observe the whole action from beginning to end

I heard Oistrakh play the Beethoven violin concerto last week.

I watched him step off the pavement, cross the road, and disappear into the post-office.

- **try**

+ **-ing** = make an experiment; do something to see what will happen

I tried sending her flowers but it didn't have any effect.

Try putting in some vinegar - that might make it taste a bit better.

+ **infinitive** = make an effort; attempt to do something difficult

Please try to understand.

I once tried to learn Japanese.

- **need**

+ **-ing** = something needs to be done

The batteries in the radio need changing.

Do you think my jacket needs cleaning?

+ **infinitive** = it is necessary for me to do it

I need to take more exercise.

He needs to work harder if he wants to make progress.