

# GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES



Or the third worst nightmare for EFL learners,  
after prepositions and determiners.

M<sup>a</sup> Mar Suárez

**GERUND / V-ING**

# GERUND AS SUBJECT, OBJECT OR COMPLEMENT OF SENTENCE/ CLAUSE

**Walking** makes me hungry. (subject)

(?)To walk makes me hungry → extremely formal, mainly used in legal texts)

Rob's given up **smoking**. (object)

Joe's fave pastime is [ **doing** nothing.  
**do** nothing.  
**to do** nothing. ]

Complement of sentence/clause.  
All three are possible, -ING being  
the **default**, most common option.

# GERUND AFTER PREPOSITIONS

Are you interested **in going** to the cinema tonight?

Why do you insist **on going** to the cinema tonight?

Why do you object **to going** to the cinema tonight?



'to' particle: followed by infinitive, i.e. I want **to** come, I expect **to** pass...

'to' preposition, **like all prepositions**, followed by -ING.

# HOW TO KNOW WHEN 'TO' IS A PREPOSITION

'to' will be a preposition when it is possible to put a **noun phrase** after it and the sentence keeps being grammatically correct.

I look forward **to** **hearing** from you → I look forward to **your answer**.

I object **to** **going** to the cinema tonight → I object to **this activity**.

I have got used **to** **drinking** coffee in the morning → I have got used to **coffee** in the morning (I didn't use to drink that before).

I am used **to** **drinking** coffee in the morning → I'm used to **coffee** (rather than tea) in the morning.

In addition **to** **putting** potatoes, some people put onion in a Spanish omelet → In addition to **potatoes**, some people put onion in a Spanish omelet.

# GERUND AFTER CERTAIN VERBS

Examples: admit, adore, advise, appreciate, avoid, can't help, can't stand, consider, delay, deny, detest, dislike, enjoy, feel like, finish, imagine, involve, keep, mind, miss, postpone, practise, prevent, somebody, resist, risk, suggest...

I like the countryside but I **miss living** in the city.

We planted that tree to **prevent people looking** into our House from the street.

**Not** is placed before the gerund to make it negative.

e.g. It's hard to **imagine not having** a mobile phone.

Some verbs can be followed by a **that-clause**:

I miss **that I don't live in the city any more**.

# GERUND AFTER SOME EXPRESSIONS

- Have difficulty/problems/trouble: I **have difficulty** hearing you.
- It's/ there's no use – there's no point (in) (*és inútil, no té sentit*):  
**It's no use/There's no point (in)** getting up early to work if you spend hours browsing your social networks instead.
- It's (not) worth (*paga la pena*): **It's worth** getting up early in the morning for a fresh start.
- spend time/hours...: It's no use/There's no point (in) getting up early to work if you **spend long hours browsing** your social networks instead.
- It's a waste of time/money: **It's a waste of time / money** watching teleshopping programs.

# IF THE SUBJECTS OF THE MAIN VERB AND THE GERUND ARE DIFERENT...

- I miss cooking so often, = I miss that I don't cook so often now.  
Subject 1      Subject 1                      Subject 1      Same person as subject 1
  - I miss him cooking. = I miss John cooking.  
Subject 1      Subject 2                      Subject 1      Subject 2  
                    object pronoun
  - I miss his cooking. = I miss John's cooking.  
Subject 1      Subject 2                      Subject 1      Subject 2  
                    possessive pronoun                      Saxon genitive - possessive
- I miss that John cooked.



# **'TO' INFINITIVE**

**'to' as a particle**

# (IN ORDER / SO AS) TO

- To say why you do something.

We gave the children some sweets **in order to / so as to / to keep** them quiet.

# 'TO' INFINITIVE AFTER CERTAIN ADJECTIVES

F.ex.: (it is/was) difficult, easy, essential, important, lovely, (un)necessary, (im)possible, (un)usual, wonderful, (I am/She will be, etc.) delighted, disappointed, (un)happy, (un)lucky, sad, surprised...

We're **sad to hear** you can't come, it would've been **wonderful to see** you again.

Notice how we specify different subjects.

It is **difficult to hear** the speech. (something generalized, nobody can hear it properly).

It is **difficult for me to hear** the speech. (I can't hear it because I'm too far, or I have hearing problems or...)

# 'TO' INFINITIVE AFTER CERTAIN NOUNS

F.ex. ability, chance, decision, failure, idea, opportunity, plan, refusal, right, way.

Notice how we specify different subjects.

What's the best **way to get** to the station? (for everybody, in regular conditions).

What's the best **way for me to get** to the station? (for this particular person or situation, for example, I don't have a car, I am limping, it is raining...)

# 'TO' INFINITIVE AFTER CERTAIN VERBS -1

F.ex.: afford, agree, appear, arrange, attempt, choose, decide, demand, deserve, hesitate, hope, learn, manage, offer, prepare, promise, pretend, refuse, seem, threaten...

*not* is placed before the infinitive to make it negative.

Jodie called to her son but he **pretended not to hear** her.

# 'TO' INFINITIVE AFTER CERTAIN VERBS -2

Some verbs require a direct object, e.g., advise, allow, enable, encourage, force, invite, order, persuade, recommend, remind, teach, tell, warn...

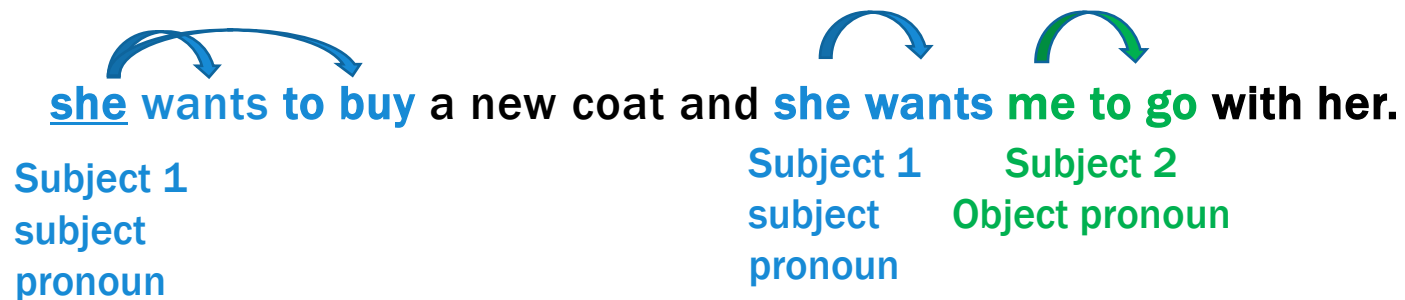
She has persuaded him to go to the opera with her.

Subject 1  
subject  
pronoun

Subject 2  
Object pronoun

# 'TO' INFINITIVE AFTER CERTAIN VERBS -3

Some verbs can be used either with or without a direct object, e.g., ask, expect, help\*, need, want, would like, would love, would hate, would prefer...



'help' can also be used with an infinitive without 'to': Please, **help (me) (to) do** this.

# INFINITIVE WITHOUT 'TO' OR BARE INFINITIVE - 1

We use it after:

- Modal verbs

You **can go** to the party, but you **must be** home early.

- After *help, let, make, would rather, had better*.

I **had better go** – it's very late, I'd **rather stay** here, though.

Notice the negative form:

I **had better not go** yet – I **would rather not miss** the end of the speech.



# INFINITIVE WITHOUT 'TO' OR BARE INFINITIVE - 2

'make' and 'let' are followed by a direct object. Notice the passive voice, which takes a 'to' or changes completely.

a) My parents **made me go** to school even in July! (active)

I **was made to go** to school even in July! (passive)

b) My parents **let me do** whatever I wanted in August. (active)

I **was allowed to do** whatever I wanted in August. (passive)

# **GERUND OR 'TO' INFINITIVE**

# 'BEGIN', 'START' AND 'CONTINUE'

'begin', 'start' and 'continue' can be followed by either a gerund or infinitive with 'to', without any difference in meaning.

He **continued writing/to write** until his hand **began aching/ to ache**.

The gerund is not usually used after a progressive form of these verbs to avoid cacophony.

It's **starting to rain**.

(?)It's **starting raining**.

# VERBS OF LIKES AND DISLIKES

Either 'to' infinitive or gerund can also be used after *hate, like, love* and *prefer* with no change in meaning.

I **prefer doing** the shopping myself / I **prefer to do** it myself.

However, there might be a slight change in meaning with 'to'.

I **like doing** the shopping myself. = I enjoy doing the shopping myself.

I **like to do** the shopping myself rather than buy online. = It's a habit or a preference.

# 'REMEMBER', 'FORGET' → BEFORE OR AFTER

Gerund: actions occurring **before** these verbs.

- I **remember reading** an article. → I remember that I read it.
- I **forgot reading** the article! → I didn't remember that I read it.

'to' infinitive: actions occurring **after** these verbs.

- I **remembered to read** the article → I had to read it and I didn't forget to read it.
- I **forgot to read** the article. → I didn't read it although I had to.

# 'STOP'

Gerund: no longer doing something.

- I **stopped buying** that magazine because I didn't like it any more.

'to' infinitive: interrupt one activity to do another.

- I **stopped (in order) to buy** a magazine on my way home.

# 'GO ON'

Gerund: continue doing something.

- I **went on buying** that magazine because I loved it so much!

'to' infinitive: do something after doing something else.

- After reading that magazine, I **went on to read** a book.

# 'MEAN'

## Gerund: 'involve'

- If you travel by plane, that **means getting** to the airport well in advance.

## 'to' infinitive: to have the intention, to intend.

- I didn't **mean to hurt** you, it was an accident.



# 'TRY'

## Gerund: 'experiment'

- If your laptop is running slowly, **try restarting** it (and see if the problema gets solved).

## 'to' infinitive: make an effort to do something.

- You must try **to study** more to get better results (even if you don't like it or if it takes a long time) .

# 'NEED'

## Gerund: 'passive meaning'

- The kitchen **needs cleaning** (= it needs to be cleaned, not necessarily by the speaker)

## 'to' infinitive: active meaning.

- We **need to clean** the kitchen before we start cooking.  
(we need it ourselves)

# 'REGRET'

Gerund: the regrets relate to something in the past

- I **regret not studying** harder when I was younger (= I should have studied harder.)

'to' infinitive: when giving a bad piece of news

- I **regret to tell** you that you have failed. (there is no regret as such on behalf of the speaker; it's a modulating expression).

# 'SEE' & 'HEAR'

## Gerund: the action is unfinished

- I can **hear** people **yelling** in the apartment above ours. They are probably having a party.
- I **see** you **doing** homework still!

## 'to' infinitive: the action is finished

- I could **hear** a glass **break** and then it all went silent.
- I **saw** him **do** his homework and then leave.