

## Gerunds and Infinitives

Verbs that are followed by other verbs can take either the **'gerund'** or the **'infinitive'**. Understanding how these words function is an important step in improving your English!

A **gerund** functions as a noun and is a verb ending with 'ing'. For example: *waiting, eating, drinking, writing etc.*

An **infinitive** is the basic root form of a verb with 'to' in front of it. For example: *to wait, to eat, to drink, to write etc.*



1. Read the dialogue below. Notice the 'verbs' (underlined) and the 'gerunds' and 'infinitives' (italics).

Nancy: Hey Eric, how was your holiday to South Africa?

Eric: Hey Nancy! The holiday was great thanks. You should definitely consider *going*!

Nancy: Oh really? What did you do there?

Eric: Well, we had a hiking trip planned for the first week, but, we postponed *going* that week to the second week because the weather wasn't very good. We chose *to go* to an animal sanctuary instead because part of it was indoors. We avoided *getting* too wet that way!

Nancy: Wow! I imagine *seeing* all those animals up close must have been amazing!

Eric: It was fantastic. I saw so many different animals. Also, seeing all of the volunteers helping the animals inspired me *to do* more. So, I decided *to sponsor* a baby elephant.



Nancy: That's so nice. Did the volunteers ask you *to sponsor* the elephant or was it your idea?

Eric: They suggested *sponsoring* an animal, but I didn't feel forced *to do* anything. Everyone was told *to help* in any way that we can. They aimed *to create* a lot of awareness. I miss *being* there so much! I want to go back next year and volunteer *to work* with the animals!

Nancy: Oh really? So, you plan on *going* back next year?

Eric: I would love to, but I don't know if I can afford *to buy* the tickets again next year.

Nancy: I definitely want *to go* now! I'll delay *bringing* it up to Jack until after our trip to Spain. I should really finish *planning* this trip before I start *thinking* about another one!



## 2. Work with a partner and discuss the following questions.

1. Have you ever considered moving abroad? If so, where and why?
2. What are some things you often postpone doing?
3. If you had the option to win one of two prizes, would you choose to win a new car or to go on holiday somewhere exotic?
4. What is a common excuse people use when they want to avoid going to an event which they have been invited to?
5. Has anyone ever inspired you to do something? If so, what was it?
6. Have you had to make any big decisions recently? What did you decide to do and why?
7. Do you have any aims which you would like to accomplish by the end of the year? If so, what are they?
8. Is there anything from your childhood which you miss doing?
9. Have you ever volunteered? If so, what did you do?
10. What do you plan on doing this weekend?
11. What is something you wish you could afford to do but can't?

Sometimes a verb replaces a noun in a sentence, this means a verb may be followed by another verb. In this case the verb replacing the noun must be in 'gerund' or 'infinitive' form.

### Examples with Gerunds:

They **are discussing** **cancelling** the party. (*Note that the gerund is not present continuous form. The present continuous form is 'be (am/is/are) + verbing'*)

They **discussed** **cancelling** the party. (*'discussed' is always followed by a gerund*)

They **have discussed** **cancelling** the party. (*Keep in mind that the first verb is going to represent the tense of the sentence. The gerund is simply replacing a noun. If the sentence was 'They discussed the party' a gerund or infinitive would not be necessary.*)

### Examples with Infinitives:

They **want** **to go** to the cinema. ('want' is always followed by the infinitive form)

They **wanted** **to go** to the cinema. (As mentioned above, the gerunds and infinitives do not change according to the tense of the sentence)

They **have wanted** **to go** to the cinema since Monday.



3. Complete the following sentences with a 'gerund' or 'infinitive'.

1. I have **considered** (gerund) ..... *giving* you the promotion. ....
2. Yesterday, I **wanted** (infinitive) .....
3. I **plan on** (gerund) .....
4. Can we **discuss** (gerund) ..... ?
5. Let's **put off** (gerund) .....
6. I **hope** (infinitive) .....
7. I **promise** (infinitive) .....
8. From next week I am going to **start** (gerund) .....
- .....
9. When I was young I **learnt** (infinitive) .....
- .....
10. I really don't **mind** (gerund) .....



4. Place the verbs in the correct column.

- |         |           |         |          |
|---------|-----------|---------|----------|
| avoid   | consider  | afford  | miss     |
| finish  | aim       | delay   | postpone |
| inspire | tell      | imagine | choose   |
| suggest | volunteer | force   | plan on  |
| start   | ask       | decide  | want     |

Verbs followed by <b>Gerunds</b>	Verbs followed by <b>Infinitives</b>



5. Select six of the verbs above and make sentences using gerunds or infinitives. Try to use different tenses if you can.

As a general rule, **gerunds** are always after **prepositions**. For example:

Jennifer is excited **about starting** university.

Peter watched the football game **after cooking**.

**Infinitives** are often (although not *always*) used after **adjectives**. For example:

It was **boring to listen** the teacher talk about grammar.

It's **dangerous to hike** up mount Everest.



#### 6. Choose the 'gerund' or 'infinitive' to complete the following sentences.

1. Can you eat without *to make/making* noise please?
2. I am so pleased *to hear/hearing* you're getting married!
3. It's very difficult *to learn/learning* how to play the violin.
4. I look forward to *to hear/hearing* from you soon.
5. I was so anxious *to meet/meeting* you!
6. Jim was exhausted after *to work/working* all day.
7. It's hard *to change/changing* a bad habit.
8. I am ready *to start/starting* dating again.
9. I can't believe we made it on time despite *to get/getting* stuck in traffic!
10. I find no sense in *to complain/complaining* all the time.
11. It is very uncommon *to tip/tipping* in China.