BANANALEARN LEARNING LIBRARY

Gerunds, infinitives and participles

Part 1 · What job does the form do?





Grammar at a glance

When you want to...	Form to use	Worked example
Identify the job of -ing	subject activity / continuous verb	Swimming helps. Noor is swimming.
Follow a particular verb	enjoy + -ing / plan + to-infinitive	We enjoy reading. We plan to read.
Follow a preposition	preposition + -ing	She left after checking the gate.
Express purpose or permission	to + base / let + person + base	I came to help. Let Noor help.

SELECT A ROW TO OPEN ITS LESSON

GERUNDS, INFINITIVES AND PARTICIPLES

Gerund uses, continuous verbs and describing forms



Lily is watering now. The club also names watering as an enjoyable activity. A third caption identifies the helper watering the plant.

An -ing form can name an activity, help make a continuous verb or describe a noun. Look at its job in the sentence.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Name an activity	Watering plants helps the garden.	The watering phrase is the subject, naming an activity.
Report progress	Lily is watering plants.	Is watering is the full ongoing verb group.
Describe a helper	The helper watering plants is Lily.	Watering plants identifies which helper.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Lily is watering plants: is watering reports the activity in progress.

Can we label a form from its spelling alone?

No. The same -ing shape may name an activity, participate in a verb group or modify a noun. Examine the whole phrase and its connection to the sentence.

YOUR TURN

In “Swimming is fun,” swimming is used as what?

An activity subject / A complete past verb

> **Answer • An activity subject**
> It names what is fun.

GERUNDS, INFINITIVES AND PARTICIPLES

Verb complements and legitimate alternatives



Lily enjoys watering and decides to water another plant. Sam avoids spilling soil and hopes to help.

The first verb affects the next form. Say “enjoy reading” and “want to read”. Some verbs allow both patterns.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
An enjoyed activity	Lily enjoys watering.	Enjoy normally takes an -ing complement in this meaning.
A chosen plan	Lily decides to water.	Decide takes a to-infinitive for the chosen action.
More than one pattern	Lily likes watering / likes to water.	Both are natural; context can affect emphasis.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Lily finished packing, then decided to leave. The complement patterns differ.

Can we use either form after any verb?

No. Some verbs strongly constrain the pattern, while others allow alternatives. Learn the whole construction with its meaning.

YOUR TURN

Choose the pattern.

enjoy to read / enjoy reading

> Answer • enjoy reading
> Enjoy takes -ing.

GERUNDS, INFINITIVES AND PARTICIPLES

Prepositions followed by -ing



The crew looks forward to helping at the garden. They also want to help. Both contain to, but it has a different job. A preparation note says to wash hands before handling soil and thanks helpers for arriving early.

When to is a preposition, an action after it takes an -ing form. Compare “look forward to meeting” with “hope to meet”.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Prepositional to	We look forward to helping.	In this expression to is a preposition, so the activity uses -ing.
Infinitive marker	We want to help.	Here to marks an infinitive with base help.
Another preposition	Wash before handling soil.	Before introduces the activity with -ing.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Sam used to work here: former habit. Sam is used to working here: he is accustomed to it.

Must a base verb follow every occurrence of to?

No. Prepositional to can take a noun or an -ing activity. Infinitival to takes a base verb. Read the expression.

YOUR TURN

Choose the pattern.

look forward to meeting / look forward to meet

> Answer • look forward to meeting
> This to is prepositional.

GERUNDS, INFINITIVES AND PARTICIPLES

Actors, bare infinitives and purpose



Lily wants Sam to carry the box; she does not say she will carry it herself. The supervisor lets Sam help and makes him wait for a safety check. Sam goes to the shed to collect a trolley.

An infinitive can express purpose, as in “I came to help”. After let plus a person, use a bare infinitive, as in “Let Sam help.”

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Name the actor	Lily wants Sam to carry the box.	Sam is the intended carrier.
Bare infinitive	The supervisor lets Sam help.	Let takes object + base verb without to here.
Give a purpose	Sam goes to the shed to collect a trolley.	To collect explains why he goes.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Lily helped Sam carry the box / helped Sam to carry the box. Both are standard.

Can to always be removed after make, let and help in every construction?

No. Active make/let use bare forms here, passive made uses to, and help allows both. Check the complete construction.

YOUR TURN

Choose the active let pattern.

let Lily to help / let Lily help

> **Answer • let Lily help**
> Let takes a bare infinitive here.

ONE LAST CHALLENGE

What job does to have?

You expect to meet a team and feel excited about it. Finish “I hope to …” and “I look forward to …” using meet.



A POSSIBLE ANSWER

I hope to meet the team. I look forward to meeting the team.

Hope takes a to-infinitive here. In look forward to, the preposition to is followed by meeting.

Play Grammar Adventure

Play at bananalearn.com

More English PDFs