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# Gerunds, infinitives and participles

## Part 2 · When the form changes the meaning





## Grammar at a glance

| When you want to... | Form to use | Worked example |
|---|---|---|
| Distinguish two events | stop doing / stop to do | She stopped singing. She stopped to sing. |
| Attempt or test a solution | try to do / try doing | Try to open it. Try turning the key gently. |
| Identify cause and response | -ing adjective / -ed adjective | An exciting match. An excited crowd. |
| Attach the opening action | participial phrase, matching subject | Carrying a tray, Noor opened the door. |

SELECT A ROW TO OPEN ITS LESSON

GERUNDS, INFINITIVES AND PARTICIPLES

# Meaning changes with stop, remember and forget



At 9:00 Lily stops watering: the watering ends. In a different log, Sam stops walking so that he can water a plant. Another task concerns remembering a required future check, compared with remembering a check already performed.

Stopped talking means the talking ended. Stopped to talk means someone paused another activity in order to talk.

| USE | EXAMPLE | WHAT TO NOTICE |
|---|---|---|
| End an activity | Lily stopped watering. | The watering activity ended. |
| Pause for a purpose | Sam stopped to water. | Sam paused another activity in order to water. |
| Remember before or after | Remember to check / remember checking. | One concerns a required action; the other recalls an event. |

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

I forgot to lock it: I failed to do the required locking. I forgot locking it: the memory of that event is missing.

### Are -ing and to interchangeable whenever both forms are grammatical?

No. Stop and remember show how both patterns can be correct while conveying different sequences and meanings.

YOUR TURN

Talking ends:
stopped talking / stopped to talk

> **Answer • stopped talking**
> The activity itself ceases.

GERUNDS, INFINITIVES AND PARTICIPLES

# Try and regret with different complements

Sam tries to open a stuck lid but cannot. Lily tests warming it as a possible solution. A separate report expresses regret about having broken a pot; an official message uses regret to inform to introduce unwelcome news.

Try to do something describes an attempt. Try doing something can suggest testing a possible solution.

| USE | EXAMPLE | WHAT TO NOTICE |
|---|---|---|
| Attempt | Sam tried to open the lid. | This describes an attempt; the separate log records failure. |
| Experiment | Lily tried warming the lid. | Warming is tested as a possible method. |
| Regret an event | Sam regrets breaking the pot. | The regret concerns an earlier action. |

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

I regret breaking it. We regret to inform you that the workshop is closed.

### Does tried to always imply failure?

No. The attempt may succeed or fail. A later clause or the scenario establishes the outcome.

YOUR TURN

Which phrase means “make an attempt to lift it”?

regret lifting it / try to lift it

> **Answer • try to lift it**
>
> Try to lift describes an attempt. Regret lifting looks back on an action with regret.

GERUNDS, INFINITIVES AND PARTICIPLES

# Participles in descriptions and verb groups



The workshop excites Sam. It is an exciting workshop and Sam is excited. A second caption names a broken pot.

An -ing or -ed form can be an adjective. An interesting lesson causes interest. An interested learner feels it.

| USE | EXAMPLE | WHAT TO NOTICE |
|---|---|---|
| Cause a reaction | The workshop is exciting. | The workshop causes excitement. |
| Experience a reaction | Sam is excited. | Sam experiences excitement. |
| A verb group | Sam has broken the pot. | Broken is the participle after has. |

## HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

The written note describes a note. Noor has written the note reports an event through a perfect group.

### Do -ing adjectives describe only things and -ed adjectives only people?

No. The useful contrast in these pairs is cause versus experience. A person can be boring or interesting, and people can be bored or interested.

## YOUR TURN

A lesson causes interest:
interesting / interested

> Answer • interesting
> Choose the cause reading.

GERUNDS, INFINITIVES AND PARTICIPLES

# Participial clauses, attachment and event order



Sam carries the pot and walks carefully. Lily finishes watering, then closes the shed. A draft reads “Carrying the pot, the gate opened,” incorrectly attaching carrying to the gate.

In an opening participial clause, check who carries out the action. Put that person or thing in the subject position that follows.

| USE | EXAMPLE | WHAT TO NOTICE |
|---|---|---|
| Shared actor | Carrying the pot, Sam walked carefully. | Sam carries and walks. |
| Earlier action | Having finished watering, Lily closed the shed. | Watering finished before the closing. |
| Repair attachment | While Sam was carrying the pot, the gate opened. | A full clause names Sam and avoids making the gate the carrier. |

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Having checked the tools, Noor opened the workshop. Checking precedes opening in this report.

### Is a shortened participial clause always better writing?

No. Shortening can obscure actors, sequence or voice. Keep a full clause when it makes the intended relationship clearer.

YOUR TURN

Choose clear attachment.

Running home, the fence appeared. / Running home, Noor waved.

> Answer • Running home, Noor waved.
> Noor supplies the runner.

ONE LAST CHALLENGE

# Who was carrying the tray?

Repair “Carrying the tray, the door swung open.” Ravi carried the tray and pushed the door.



A POSSIBLE ANSWER

## Carrying the tray, Ravi pushed the door open.

Ravi now follows the opening phrase, so the reader knows who carried the tray.

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