GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES

THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE:
Before the gerund can be understood, it is important to be familiar with the present participle.

The gerund and the present participle are formed the same way, so they can be difficult to tell apart.

\[ \text{Present participle} = \text{Base} + \text{ing} \]
\[ \text{Gerund} = \text{Base} + \text{ing} \]

However, the two forms have different uses. The present participle can be used as a verb or an adjective as explained below.

Uses of the present participle:
1. Present participle as a continuous verb:
   - She is writing.
   - I have been waiting for an hour.

2. Present participle following movement and position verbs:
   - I like to go sightseeing when I travel.
   - He sat watching the performance.

3. Present participle following perception verbs:
   - Perception verbs: Seeing/watching, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling
   - I watched the ballerinas dancing.
   - He could hear music playing.

4. Present participle as an adjective:
   - He made a startling discovery.
   - Let’s get out of this freezing weather!

5. Present participle expressing two simultaneous actions:
   - She wrote her essay while she listened to music.
   - She wrote her essay listening to music.
   - He passed his old school as he drove to work.
   - Driving to work, he passed his old school.

6. Present participle as an explanation:
   - Present participles can be used instead of since or because to explain a reason for an action
   - Being afraid of the dark, he always slept with a light on.
   - Remembering that they were out of eggs, she headed to the grocery store.
GERUNDS:

Although gerunds look the same as the present participle, they are used for a different purpose.

Gerunds function as nouns and can be used in a number of contexts as highlighted below.

Uses of the gerund:

1. Gerund as the subject of the sentence:
   
   - *Exercising* can help improve physical and mental health.
   
   - *Reading* is a great way to pass the time.

2. Gerund as the complement of the verb to be:
   
   - The most important strategy for learning a new language is practicing regularly.
   
   - His pastimes are *skiing*, *biking*, and *cooking*.

3. Gerund following prepositions:
   
   - The gerund is required when a verb follows a preposition.
   
   - *Prepositions*: At, before, after, by, etc.
   
   - I’ve never been good at saying goodbye.
   
   - Be sure to check over your work before submitting it.
   
   - She expressed her feelings by writing about them.

4. Gerund in compound nouns:
   
   - I’ll meet you at the *swimming pool*.
   
   - She bought a new pair of *running shoes* for the race.
   
   - When the *washing machine* was broken, he had to wash his clothes by hand.

5. Gerund following phrasal verbs:
   
   - **Phrasal verbs**: verb + preposition or adverb
   
   - She *gave up* *eating* junk food for her diet.
   
   - His mom *hinted* at *getting* a dog for his birthday.
   
   - I always *put off* starting my homework until the last minute.

   **Note**: Some phrasal verbs include the word *to* as a preposition and therefore must be followed by a gerund (e.g., *to look forward to*, *to be used to*, *to get around to*).

   These can be distinguished from infinitives by checking to see if the word *it* can follow the word *to* logically; if it can, then *to* is a preposition and a gerund should follow it.

   - I *look forward to* seeing you again.

   (I *look forward to* *it* → *to* is a preposition)

   - She is *used to* *living* on her own.

   (She is used to *it* → *to* is a preposition)

6. Gerund after certain expressions:
   
   - Gerunds are required after expressions like *can’t help*, *can’t stand*, *to be worth*, and *it’s no use*.
   
   - I *couldn’t help* feeling bad about what had happened.
   
   - He *can’t stand* being late for work.
   
   - It might be *worth* *considering* other options.
   
   - It’s *no use* *trying* to reason with her.

**Note**: Based on the context of these nouns, it is clear that the gerund is used as part of a compound noun and not as a verb. For example, *running shoes* is a compound noun that means shoes worn for running and not shoes that are performing the action of running.
INFINITIVES:

Infinitives = to + verb base (verb in simplest stem form)

Infinitives can function as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs

Noun: She likes to ski. (To ski is a thing, or noun, that she likes.)

Adjective: Canada is one of his favourite places to visit. (To visit is an adjective that modifies the noun Canada.)

Adverb: I always go to the library to study. (To study is an adverb that modifies the verb go.)

Note: Sometimes, the to is optional:

   Herbal tea helps me (to) sleep at night.

The zero infinitive:

Sometimes, the word to is omitted when forming an infinitive. A zero infinitive then, is just the base form of the verb.

Unlike the example above, omitting the to is not optional. The zero infinitive is required when the word to would not make sense in the context of the sentence.

   Incorrect: He can to see better with his new glasses.

   Correct: He can see better with his new glasses.

The following list clarifies when the zero infinitive should be used.

Uses of the zero infinitive:

1. Zero infinitive after auxiliaries:

   Auxiliaries: can, cannot, should, would, could, shall, must, might, etc.

   I can go tomorrow if you would like.

   He might stay another night if he cannot find another place to stay.

   You must bring warm clothes and you should also pack an umbrella.

2. Zero infinitive after verbs of perception:

   Verbs of perception: See/watch, hear, feel, smell, taste

   I saw you wave from across the parking lot.

   They heard someone knock at the door.

   She felt the wind brush against her face.

3. Zero infinitive after the verbs "make" and "let":

   My parents made me finish my homework.

   The teacher let them leave class early.

   Let's wait a while before we go swimming.

4. Zero infinitive after the expression "had better":

   We had better study for the test next week.

   I had better go to bed, I have an early morning.

5. Zero infinitive with suggestions using "why":

   Why wait to see the movie? We could go now.

   Why not get some pizza for supper?
GERUNDS VS. INFINITIVES:

Certain verbs can be followed by either a gerund or an infinitive. Sometimes, both expressions will have the same meaning, but sometimes they will mean different things.

Some examples of gerunds and infinitives with the SAME meaning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Followed by a Gerund</th>
<th>Followed by an Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attempt</td>
<td>I attempted <em>surfing</em> for the first time in California.</td>
<td>I attempted to <em>surf</em> for the first time in California.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>Did you begin <em>noticing</em> any changes in his behavior?</td>
<td>Did you begin to <em>notice</em> any changes in his behavior?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue</td>
<td>She continued <em>working</em> on her Spanish after the class ended.</td>
<td>She continued to <em>work</em> on her Spanish after the class ended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Don’t neglect <em>changing</em> your car’s oil</td>
<td>Don’t neglect to <em>change</em> your car’s oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start</td>
<td>The store started <em>selling</em> the product in November.</td>
<td>The store started to <em>sell</em> the product in November.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer</td>
<td>If you prefer <em>waiting</em> until next week, that’s fine</td>
<td>If you prefer to <em>wait</em> until next week, that’s fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend</td>
<td>She recommended <em>checking</em> online for the product</td>
<td>She recommended to <em>check</em> online for the product</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some examples of gerunds and infinitives with DIFFERENT meanings:

<table>
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<th>Verb</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Come</td>
<td>They <em>came running</em> in the gym.</td>
<td>They <em>came to run</em> in the gym. (i.e., They entered the gym while running)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go on</td>
<td>She <em>went on</em> <em>singing</em> until the teacher asked her to stop.</td>
<td>She <em>went on to sing</em> professionally. (i.e., she became a singer later in life)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop</td>
<td>He <em>stopped</em> <em>speaking</em> with his friend after their argument.</td>
<td>He <em>stopped to speak</em> with his friend on his way to work. (i.e., he stopped what he was doing to speak to his friend)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try</td>
<td>She <em>tried</em> <em>meditating</em> to relieve her stress.</td>
<td>She <em>tried to meditate</em> to relieve her stress, but she was interrupted. (i.e., she was unsuccessful in her attempt to meditate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember</td>
<td>Do you <em>remember going</em> to see that play?</td>
<td>Did you <em>remember to go</em> to the bank? (i.e., the remembered action is in question; it may not have happened)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources: (MLA 8th Edition)


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