

Verb patterns: verb + infinitive or verb + -ing?

Verbs followed by a *to*-infinitive

Some verbs can be followed immediately by a *to*-infinitive:

<i>afford</i>	<i>demand</i>	<i>like</i>	<i>pretend</i>
<i>agree</i>	<i>fail</i>	<i>love</i>	<i>promise</i>
<i>arrange</i>	<i>forget</i>	<i>manage</i>	<i>refuse</i>
<i>ask</i>	<i>hate</i>	<i>mean (= intend)</i>	<i>remember</i>
<i>begin</i>	<i>help</i>	<i>need</i>	<i>start</i>
<i>choose</i>	<i>hope</i>	<i>offer</i>	<i>try</i>
<i>continue</i>	<i>intend</i>	<i>plan</i>	<i>want</i>
<i>decide</i>	<i>learn</i>	<i>prefer</i>	

I can't afford to go on holiday.

It began to rain.

She hopes to go to university next year.

My mother never learnt to swim.

Did you remember to ring Nigel?

See also:

- [Help somebody \(to\) do](#)
- [Want](#)
- [Verbs followed by a direct object and a *to*-infinitive](#)

Verbs followed by *-ing*

-ing but not *to*-infinitive

Some verbs are normally followed by the *-ing* form, not the *to*-infinitive:

<i>admit</i>	<i>deny</i>	<i>finish</i>	<i>mind</i>
<i>avoid</i>	<i>dislike</i>	<i>give up</i>	<i>miss</i>
<i>(can't) help</i>	<i>enjoy</i>	<i>imagine</i>	<i>practise</i>
<i>(can't) stand</i>	<i>fancy</i>	<i>involve</i>	<i>put off</i>
<i>consider</i>	<i>feel like</i>	<i>keep (on)</i>	<i>risk</i>

*I always **enjoy cooking**.*

Not: ~~*I always enjoy to cook.*~~

*We haven't **finished eating** yet.*

Not: ~~*We haven't finished to eat.*~~

*She **keeps changing** her mind about the wedding.*

New subject before *-ing*

Some of these verbs (e.g. *can't stand*, *dislike*, *imagine*, *involve*, *mind*, *miss*, *put off* and *risk*) can be used with a new subject before the *-ing* form (underlined in the examples below). If the new subject is a pronoun, it is in the object form (*me*, *him*, *her*, *us*, *them*):

*We just couldn't **imagine** Gerry **singing** in public.*

*Do you **mind** me **being** here while you're working?*

*I don't want to **risk** him **losing** his job.*

See also:

- [Verbs followed by *-ing*](#)

Verbs followed by a *to*-infinitive or *-ing*

Hate, like, love, prefer

Hate, like, love and *prefer* can be followed either by *-ing* or a *to*-infinitive. The difference in meaning is often small. The *-ing* form emphasises the verb itself. The *to*-infinitive puts the emphasis more on the preference for, or the results of, the action.

Compare

<i>-ing</i> form	<i>to</i>-infinitive
<i>I love cooking Indian food.</i> (emphasis on the process itself and enjoyment of it)	<i>I like to drink juice in the morning, and tea at lunchtime.</i> (emphasis more on the preference or habit)
<i>She hates cleaning her room.</i> (emphasis on the process itself and no enjoyment of it)	<i>I hate to be the only person to disagree.</i> (emphasis more on the result: I would prefer not to be in that situation.)
<i>Most people prefer watching a film at the cinema rather than on TV.</i> (emphasis on the process itself and enjoyment of it)	<i>We prefer to drive during the day whenever we can.</i> (emphasis more on the result and on the habit or preference. The speaker doesn't necessarily enjoy the process of driving at any time of day.)

Hate, like, love, prefer with *would* or *should*

When *hate, like, love* and *prefer* are used with *would* or *should*, only the *to*-infinitive is used, not the *-ing* form:

She'd love to get a job nearer home.

Not: ~~*She'd love getting a job nearer home.*~~

Would you like to have dinner with us on Friday?

To-infinitive or *-ing* form with a change in meaning

Some verbs can be followed by a *to*-infinitive or the *-ing* form, but with a change in meaning:

<i>go on</i>	<i>need</i>	<i>remember</i>	<i>try</i>
<i>mean</i>	<i>regret</i>	<i>stop</i>	<i>want</i>

Compare

<i>-ing</i> form	<i>to</i>-infinitive

<i>Working in London means leaving home at 6.30. (Because I work in London, this is the result or consequence.)</i>	<i>I didn't mean to make you cry. (I didn't intend to make you cry.)</i>
<i>He went on singing after everyone else had finished. (He continued singing without stopping.)</i>	<i>She recited a poem, then went on to sing a lovely folk song. (She recited the poem first, then she sang the song.)</i>
<i>I tried searching the web and finally found an address for him. (I searched the web to see what information I could find.)</i>	<i>I tried to email Simon but it bounced back. (I tried/attempted to email him but I did not succeed.)</i>
<i>She stopped crying as soon as she saw her mother. (She was crying, and then she didn't cry anymore.)</i>	<i>We stopped to buy some water at the motorway service area. (We were travelling and we stopped for a short time in order to buy some water.)</i>

See also:

- [Mean](#)
- [Need](#)
- [Remember or remind?](#)
- [Stop + -ing form or to-infinitive](#)
- [Want](#)

Verbs followed by an infinitive without *to*

Let, make

Let and *make* are followed by an infinitive without *to* in active voice sentences. They always have an object (underlined) before the infinitive:

*Let me **show** you this DVD I've got.*

*They **made** us **wait** while they checked our documents.*

Not: ~~They made us to wait ...~~

Help

Help can be followed by an infinitive without *to* or a *to*-infinitive:

*She **helped** me **find** a direction in life.*

*Everyone can **help to reduce** carbon emissions by using public transport.*

See also:

- *Help somebody (to) do*
- *Let, let's*
- *Make*

Verbs followed by *-ing* or an infinitive without *to*

A group of verbs connected with feeling, hearing and seeing can be used with *-ing* or with an infinitive without *to*:

<i>feel</i>	<i>notice</i>	<i>see</i>
<i>hear</i>	<i>overhear</i>	<i>watch</i>

When they are used with *-ing*, these verbs emphasise the action or event in progress. When they are used with an infinitive without *to*, they emphasise the action or event seen as a whole, or as completed.

Compare

<i>-ing</i>	infinitive without <i>to</i>
<i>She heard people shouting in the street below and looked out of the window.</i> (emphasises that the shouting probably continued or was repeated)	<i>I heard someone shout 'Help!', so I ran to the river.</i> (emphasises the whole event: the person probably shouted only once)
<i>A police officer saw him running along the street.</i> (emphasises the running as it was happening)	<i>Emily saw Philip run out of Sandra's office.</i> (emphasises the whole event from start to finish)

Verbs followed by a direct object and a *to*-infinitive

Some verbs are used with a direct object (underlined> followed by a *to*-infinitive. These verbs include:

<i>advise</i>	<i>hate</i>	<i>like</i>	<i>persuade</i>	<i>request</i>
---------------	-------------	-------------	-----------------	----------------

<i>ask</i>	<i>help</i>	<i>love</i>	<i>prefer</i>	<i>teach</i>
<i>challenge</i>	<i>instruct</i>	<i>need</i>	<i>recommend</i>	<i>tell</i>
<i>choose</i>	<i>intend</i>	<i>order</i>	<i>remind</i>	<i>want</i>
<i>forbid</i>	<i>invite</i>			

I advised him to get a job as soon as possible.

*Did Martin **teach** Gary to play squash?*

*They **want** me to go to Germany with them.*