



Gerunds and Infinitives – how and when to use them and common mistakes

A lot of my students HATE gerunds and infinitives, they think they are really difficult and complicated to use. The good news is they're NOT! Once you learn the basic rules it's quite easy. They are also really important. Gerunds and infinitives are a big part of how we construct the English language. Although mistakes are easier to ignore in spoken English, in your written English they are incredibly obvious! It looks horrible when people make mistakes with them in their writing. But don't worry! Listen to our post and answer the questions below to learn all you need to know about gerunds and infinitives.

1) When do we use to + inf?

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2) Why do Spanish speakers get confused with for or to?

3) What's the test to decide which to use?

4) What are the common mistakes students make with infinitives?

5) When do we use the gerund?

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6) Why do we make mistakes like "to run is my favourite hobby?"

7) Is it common for a verb to function as a noun?

ANSWERS

1) When do we use to + inf?

- After certain verbs
- After adjectives
- To express the reason or purpose, to say WHY

2) Why do Spanish speakers get confused with for or to? Because in Spanish you only use one preposition to express both, “para”

3) What’s the test to decide which to use? Ask the question WHY? If you can say why you’re doing something in your sentence then use TO. If not, use FOR. For example,

“I’m doing The Edinburgh Experience’s summer course to improve my English” – WHY? To improve my English

“I’m buying a present for my mother’s birthday” – WHY? Because I’m a nice person! But the answer isn’t in the sentence I constructed.

4) What are the common mistakes students make with infinitives? Very often students put TO and FOR together – I need for to buy a ticket. Also, they confuse infinitives with dependant prepositions. I want go to the cinema. Go TO is dependant, it explains WHERE I’m going. Want TO is an infinitive because the verb is always followed by TO.

5) When do we use the gerund?

- After certain verbs
- When the verb functions as a noun
- After prepositions, which means after phrasal verbs!

6) Why do we make mistakes like “to run is my favourite hobby?” Because in Spanish you use an infinitive to function as a noun e.g. “Correr es my hobby favorito”. It’s easy to make the mistake because we translate directly.

7) Is it common for a verb to function as a noun? Yes, really common. When we talk about activities, the verb is functioning as a noun for example smoking, eating, reading, cooking, listening to music.....

8) What are some common mistakes students make with gerunds? Firstly, using the infinitive when the verb is functioning as a noun, like we explained earlier. Secondly, confusing gerunds with continuous verb tenses. For example, he’s running a marathon. This is NOT a gerund. If you have the verb to be as an auxiliary, then it is a continuous form.

GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES

<u>VERBS + INFINITIVE</u>	<u>VERBS + ING</u>
<p>- after some verbs</p> <p>- after adjectives <i>e.g. He's happy to drive</i></p> <p>- to say why you do something</p> <p>for vs. to Ask the question <i>WHY?</i></p> <p><i>I'm going to Scotland to do Claire's course</i> WHY? <i>To do the course</i></p> <p><i>I work for my father</i> WHY? <i>No, can't answer</i></p> <p>Common mistakes</p> <p>I'm learning English for to get a good job</p> <p>I want go to the cinema</p>	<p>- after some verbs</p> <p>- when the verb functions as a noun (<i>actually very common</i>) <i>e.g. Swimming is my favourite hobby</i></p> <p>- use a verb after a preposition (<i>except -to!</i>) That means AFTER PHRASAL VERBS!!! <i>e.g. He spends a lot of money on going to the cinema</i></p> <p>Common mistakes</p> <p><i>He is for to going to home</i> - don't confuse continuous forms with -ing</p> <p><i>To run is my favourite hobby</i> – remember when the verb functions as a noun it needs -ing!</p>

Some verbs can take both but with a change in meaning. These are -

<p>Remember and Forget to + inf = the actions has not happened (yet) <i>Remember to call your mother</i> <i>I forgot to lock the door</i></p> <p>Remember and forget + ing = a memory <i>I remember going to my grandmother's house when I was little</i> <i>I'll never forget visiting Edinburgh</i></p> <p>**** we often use the expression "I'll never forget" when talking about past memories. It means the same as I will always remember.</p>	<p>Try to + inf = make an effort <i>You should try to work harder</i></p> <p>Try + ing = experiment to see if something works <i>I can't sleep – Have you tried drinking warm milk before you go to bed?</i></p>
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*****REMEMBER*****

Modal verbs **NEVER TAKE TO!!!!!!** Only infinitive
MAKE and LET ONLY TAKE INFINITIVE

Common verbs which take to + infinitive

Decide, help, hope, learn, need, offer, plan, pretend, promise, start, would like, want

Common verbs which take -ing

Enjoy, finish, go on, hate, like, love, (don't) mind, spend (time), stop