

## Gerunds and Infinitives

We use gerunds (verb + ing):

- After certain verbs - I **enjoy singing**
- After prepositions - I drank a cup of coffee **before leaving**
- As the subject or object of a sentence - **Swimming** is good exercise

We use 'to' + infinitive:

- After certain verbs - We **decided to leave**
- After many adjectives - It's **difficult to get** up early
- To show purpose - I came to London **to study** English

We use the bare infinitive (the infinitive without 'to'):

- After modal verbs - I can **meet** you at six o'clock
- After 'let', 'make' and (sometimes) 'help' - The teacher let us **leave** early
- After some verbs of perception (see, watch, hear, notice, feel, sense) - I watched her **walk** away
- After expressions with 'why' - why **go** out the night before an exam?

[→ view complete list of verbs followed by gerund/infinitive]

**\*Some verbs can be followed by either the gerund or the infinitive with a change in meaning.\***

### Remember + gerund

This is when you remember something that has happened in the past. You have a memory of it, like being able to see a movie of it in your head.

- I remember going to the beach when I was a child. (= I have a memory of going to the beach).
- He remembers closing the door. (= He has a memory of closing the door).

### Remember + to + infinitive

This is when you think of something that you need to do. (And usually, you then do the thing).

- I remembered to buy milk. (= I was walking home and the idea that I needed milk came into my head, so I bought some).
- She remembered to send a card to her grandmother.

### Forget + gerund

This is the opposite of remember + gerund. It's when you forget about a memory, something that you've done in the past.

- Have we really studied this topic before? I forget reading about it.
- I told my brother that we'd spent Christmas at Granny's house in 1985, but he'd forgotten going there.

### Forget + to + infinitive

This is the opposite of remember + to + infinitive. It's when you want to do something, but you forget about it.

- I forgot to call my mother. (= I wanted to call my mother, but when it was a good time to call her, I forgot. I was thinking about something else, and the idea to call my mother didn't come into my head).
- She keeps forgetting to bring his book back.

### Try + gerund

This is when you do something as an experiment. The thing you do is not difficult, but you want to see if doing it will have the result that you want.

- I wanted to stop smoking, so I tried using nicotine patches. (= Using nicotine patches was easy, but I wanted to know if it would help me stop smoking).
- She tried giving up chocolate, but it didn't help her lose weight. (It was easy for her to give up chocolate. She gave it up to see if it would help her lose weight, but it didn't).

### Try + to + infinitive

This is when the thing you do itself is difficult. In the present tense or future tense, this means you might not succeed in doing it. In the past tense, it means that you made an effort to do the thing, but you did not succeed.

- I'll try to carry the suitcase, but it looks too heavy for me.
- She tried to catch the bus, but she couldn't run fast enough.

### Look at the difference:

- I tried giving up chocolate (it was no problem to stop eating chocolate) but it didn't make me feel more healthy.
- I tried to give up chocolate, but it was too hard. I always ate some when my friends offered it to me.
- It was too hot in the room. I tried opening the window (it was easy to open the window). It didn't help though, because it was very hot outside too.
- I tried to open the window, but I couldn't because it was stuck.

### Stop + gerund

When we stop doing something it means the verb in the gerund is the thing that we stop. It can mean 'stop forever' or 'stop at that moment'.

- I stopped working when I was expecting a baby. (Working is the thing I stopped).
- My grandmother stopped driving when she was 85. (Driving is the thing she stopped).
- My boss came into the room, so I stopped browsing the internet.
- There was a fire alarm, so I stopped eating and went outside.

### Stop + to + infinitive

In this case, we stop something else in order to do the verb in the infinitive.

- I stopped to eat lunch. (I stopped something else, maybe working or studying, because I wanted to eat lunch.
- She was shopping and she stopped to get a cup of coffee. (She stopped shopping because she wanted to get a cup of coffee).

### Look at the difference:

- I stopped smoking. (I gave up cigarettes OR I threw away my cigarette at that moment).
- I stopped to smoke. (I stopped doing something else because I wanted to have a cigarette).

### Regret + gerund

This is when you are sorry about something you did in the past and you wish you hadn't done it.

- I regret going to bed so late. I'm really tired today.
- She regrets leaving school when she was sixteen. She wishes that she had studied more and then gone to university.

### Regret + to + infinitive

We use this construction when we are giving someone bad news, in quite a formal way. The verb is almost always something like 'say' or 'tell' or 'inform'.

- I regret to tell you that the train has been delayed.
- The company regrets to inform employees that the London office will close next year.