

Using Gerunds and Infinitives

Gerunds and infinitives are verb forms that can take the place of a noun in a sentence. The following guidelines and lists will help you figure out whether a gerund or infinitive is needed.

1. Following a verb (*gerund or infinitive*)

Both gerunds and infinitives can replace a noun as the object of a verb. Whether you use a gerund or an infinitive depends on the main verb in the sentence. Consult the lists below to find out which form to use following which verbs.

I *expect* **to have** the report done by Friday. [INFINITIVE]
I *anticipate* **having** the report done by Friday. [GERUND]

Some common verbs followed by a gerund

(note that phrasal verbs, marked here with *, always fall into this category):

<i>acknowledge</i>	She <i>acknowledged</i> receiving assistance.
* <i>accuse of</i>	He <i>was accused of</i> smuggling contraband goods.
<i>admit</i>	They <i>admitted</i> falsifying the data.
<i>advise</i>	The author <i>advises</i> undertaking further study.
<i>anticipate</i>	He <i>anticipates</i> having trouble with his supervisor.
<i>appreciate</i>	I <i>appreciated</i> having a chance to read your draft.
<i>avoid</i>	He <i>avoided</i> answering my question.
<i>complete</i>	I finally <i>completed</i> writing my thesis.
<i>consider</i>	They will <i>consider</i> granting you money.
<i>defer</i>	She <i>deferred</i> writing her report.
<i>delay</i>	We <i>delayed</i> reporting the results until we were sure.
<i>deny</i>	They <i>denied</i> copying the information.
<i>discuss</i>	They <i>discussed</i> running the experiments again.
<i>entail</i>	This review procedure <i>entails</i> repeating the test.
* <i>look after</i>	He will <i>look after</i> mailing the tickets.
* <i>insist on</i>	He <i>insisted on</i> proofreading the article again.
<i>involve</i>	This procedure <i>involves</i> testing each sample twice.
<i>justify</i>	My results <i>justify</i> taking drastic action.
<i>mention</i>	The author <i>mentions</i> seeing this event.
* <i>plan on</i>	They had <i>planned on</i> attending the conference.
<i>postpone</i>	The committee has <i>postponed</i> writing the report.
<i>recall</i>	I cannot <i>recall</i> getting those results before.
<i>resent</i>	He <i>resented</i> spending so much time on the project.
<i>recommend</i>	She <i>recommends</i> reading Marx.
<i>resist</i>	The writer <i>resists</i> giving any easy answers.
<i>risk</i>	She <i>risks</i> losing her viewing time.
<i>sanction</i>	They will not <i>sanction</i> copying without permission.
<i>suggest</i>	I <i>suggest</i> repeating the experiment.
* <i>take care of</i>	He will <i>take care of</i> sending it to you.
<i>tolerate</i>	She can't <i>tolerate</i> waiting for results.

Some common verbs followed by an infinitive:

<i>afford</i>	We cannot <i>afford to hesitate</i> .
<i>agree</i>	The professors <i>agreed to disagree</i> .
<i>appear</i>	The results <i>appear to support</i> your theory.
<i>arrange</i>	They had <i>arranged to meet</i> at noon.
<i>beg</i>	I <i>beg to differ</i> with you.
<i>care</i>	Would you <i>care to respond</i> ?
<i>claim</i>	She <i>claims to have</i> new data.
<i>consent</i>	Will you <i>consent to run</i> for office?
<i>decide</i>	When did he <i>decide to withdraw</i> ?
<i>demand</i>	I <i>demand to see</i> the results of the survey.
<i>deserve</i>	She <i>deserves to have</i> a fair hearing.
<i>expect</i>	The committee <i>expects to decide</i> by tomorrow.
<i>fail</i>	The trial <i>failed to confirm</i> his hypothesis.
<i>hesitate</i>	I <i>hesitate to try</i> the experiment again.
<i>hope</i>	What do you <i>hope to accomplish</i> ?
<i>learn</i>	We have <i>learned to proceed</i> with caution.
<i>manage</i>	How did she <i>manage to find</i> the solution?
<i>neglect</i>	The author <i>neglected to provide</i> an index.
<i>need</i>	Do we <i>need to find</i> new subjects?
<i>offer</i>	We could offer <i>to change</i> the time of the meeting.
<i>plan</i>	They had <i>planned to attend</i> the conference.
<i>prepare</i>	He was not <i>prepared to give</i> a lecture.
<i>pretend</i>	I do not <i>pretend to know</i> the answer.
<i>promise</i>	They <i>promise to demonstrate</i> the new equipment.
<i>refuse</i>	She <i>refused to cooperate</i> any longer.
<i>seem</i>	Something <i>seems to be</i> wrong with your design.
<i>struggle</i>	We <i>struggled to understand</i> her point of view.
<i>swear</i>	He <i>swears to tell</i> the truth.
<i>threaten</i>	The team <i>threatened to stop</i> their research.
<i>volunteer</i>	Will you <i>volunteer to lead</i> the group?
<i>wait</i>	We could not <i>wait to hear</i> the outcome.
<i>want</i>	She did not <i>want to go</i> first.
<i>wish</i>	Do you <i>wish to participate</i> ?

2. Following a preposition (*gerund only*)

Gerunds can follow a preposition; infinitives cannot.

Can you touch your toes *without bending* your knees?
He was fined *for driving* over the speed limit.
She got the money *by selling* the car.
A corkscrew is a tool *for taking* corks out of bottles.

Note: Take care not to confuse the preposition “to” with an infinitive form, or with an auxiliary form such as *have to*, *used to*, *going to*.

He went back <i>to writing</i> his paper.	[PREPOSITION + GERUND]
I <i>used to live</i> in Mexico.	[AUXILIARY + VERB]
I <i>want to go</i> home.	[VERB + INFINITIVE]

3. Following an indirect object (*infinitive only*)

Some verbs are followed by a pronoun or noun referring to a person, and then an infinitive. Gerunds cannot be used in this position.

Some common verbs followed by an indirect object plus an infinitive:

<i>ask</i>	I must <i>ask</i> you to reconsider your statement.
<i>beg</i>	They <i>begged</i> her to stay for another term.
<i>cause</i>	His findings <i>caused</i> him to investigate further.
<i>challenge</i>	Wilkins <i>challenged</i> Watson to continue the research.
<i>convince</i>	Can we <i>convince</i> them to fund our study?
<i>encourage</i>	She <i>encouraged</i> him to look beyond the obvious.
<i>expect</i>	They did not <i>expect</i> us to win an award.
<i>forbid</i>	The author <i>forbade</i> me to change his wording.
<i>force</i>	They cannot <i>force</i> her to reveal her sources.
<i>hire</i>	Did the department <i>hire</i> him to teach the new course?
<i>instruct</i>	I will <i>instruct</i> her to prepare a handout.
<i>invite</i>	We <i>invite</i> you to attend the ceremony.
<i>need</i>	They <i>need</i> her to show the slides.
<i>order</i>	He <i>ordered</i> the group to leave the building.
<i>persuade</i>	Can we <i>persuade</i> you to contribute again?
<i>remind</i>	Please <i>remind</i> him to check the references.
<i>require</i>	They will <i>require</i> you to submit an outline.
<i>teach</i>	We should <i>teach</i> them to follow standard procedures.
<i>tell</i>	Did she <i>tell</i> him to make three copies?
<i>urge</i>	I <i>urge</i> you to read the instructions before you begin.
<i>want</i>	I do not <i>want</i> you to have an accident.
<i>warn</i>	Why didn't they <i>warn</i> me to turn down the heat?

*Prepared for use at the University of Toronto by Martine Johnson, International Student Centre,
and revised 2004 by Rebecca Smollett.*

Over 50 other files giving advice on university writing are available at www.writing.utoronto.ca