

## Verb Form: Gerund or Infinitive

The gerund is the **-ing** form of a verb. The infinitive is the **to** form of a verb. Compare these lists.

**Gerunds:** sketching, painting, weaving, planning

**Infinitives:** to sketch, to paint, to weave, to plan

One of the most common ways to use gerunds and infinitives is as the direct object of a verb; for example, in the sentence *She loves painting*, the gerund *painting* is the direct object. Some verbs can only be followed by gerunds; others can only be followed by infinitives. There are no clear rules for which verbs take each verb form, so you may want to consult a good dictionary. You will also find that you memorize the verbs that you use the most.

### Common verbs that take only infinitives (to forms) as verbal direct objects

agree	hesitate	promise	want	propose
decide	learn	neglect	plan	intend
expect	need	hope	attempt	pretend

I hope to go on a museum tour soon. (NOT: I hope going on a museum tour soon.)

He promised to go on a photography trip. (NOT: He promised going on a photography trip.)

She was nervous, so she hesitated to speak. (NOT: She was nervous, so she hesitated speaking.)

### Common verbs that take only gerunds (-ing forms) as verbal direct objects

admit	delay	excuse	imagine	postpone	suggest
appreciate	deny	face	involve	practice	understand
avoid	detest	feel like	keep (on)	put off	
burst out	dislike	finish	leave off	resent	
(crying)	endure	forgive	mention	resist	
consider	enjoy	give up	mind	risk	
contemplate	escape	(can't) help	miss	(can't) stand	

They always avoid drinking before welding. (NOT: They always avoid to drink before welding.)

I recall asking her which aperture to use. (NOT: I recall to ask her which aperture to use.)

She put off buying a new painting. (NOT: She put off to buy a new painting.)

### Common verbs that can take gerunds or infinitives as verbal direct objects with no change in their meaning

advise	continue	hate	love	prefer	start
allow	feel*	hear*	notice*	propose	watch*
can't bear	forbid	intend	observe*	see*	
begin	go	like	permit	smell*	

She continues to work at the art supply store.

She continues working at the art supply store.

Brent started to blow glass.

Brent started blowing glass.

**Common verbs that take either gerunds or infinitives as verbal direct objects, resulting in changed meaning**

- Go on** She went on sewing as her assistants cleaned the studio. (She continued sewing.)  
She went on to win a Coty award. (She won the award after she made her designs.)
- Forget** Jack forgets to take out the turpentine. (He regularly forgets.)  
and Jack forgets taking out the turpentine. (He did it, but doesn't remember doing it now.)  
**Remember** Jack forgot to take out the turpentine. (He never did it.)  
Jack forgot taking out the turpentine. (He did it, but didn't remember doing it some-time later.)
- Jack remembers to take out the turpentine. (He regularly remembers.)  
Jack remembers taking out the turpentine. (He did it, and he remembers doing it now.)
- Jack remembered to take out the turpentine. (He did it.)  
Jack remembered taking out the turpentine. (He did it, and he remembered doing it sometime later.)
- Note: In the second of each pair of sentences above, the past progressive gerund form having taken can be used in place of taking to avoid any possible confusion.
- He regrets skipping the art history review session. (He is thinking about a past action and is sorry.)
- Regret** We regret to inform you that the museum is closed today. (an official announcement)
- I stopped asking my roommate to help me with my assignment. (I don't ask her to help anymore.)
- Stop** I stopped to ask my roommate to help me with my assignment. (I paused in order to ask her to help me.)
- Try** They tried painting over the graffiti, but it didn't work. (They performed an experiment to see what would happen.)  
The police tried to find the art thieves for 20 years, with no success. (They made an effort to do something difficult.)

**Sense verbs that take an object plus a gerund or a simple verb**

Certain sense (or perception) verbs take an object followed by either a gerund or a simple verb (infinitive form minus the word to). With many of the verbs that follow the object, the use of the gerund shows continuous action while the use of the simple verb shows a one-time action.

feel          hear          smell          see          watch          notice          observe

- Tom heard the gallery director shouting for help. (Tom heard him shout again and again.)  
Tom heard the gallery director shout for help. (Tom heard him shout once.)  
We watched him playing the violin. (continuous action)  
We watched him play the violin. (continuous action)