GRAMMARTOP
ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN PLAIN ENGLISH

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The [infinitive](#) is the most basic form of a verb – for example, 'to run' or 'to eat'. Most of the time, we use a verb in a variety of other forms, but sometimes we can also use it in this basic form. Here are some of the main uses of the infinitive:

Infinitive as a noun

Sometimes, the infinitive form of a verb is used not as a normal verb – but as a [noun](#). As a noun, it can be the subject or object of the verb.

- ***To err*** *is human. (the infinitive 'to err' is the subject of the verb 'is')*
- *She likes **to run**. (the infinitive 'to play' serves as the object of the verb 'likes')*

Infinitive to qualify an adjective or a noun

We can also use the infinitive form after some [adjectives](#) and nouns, to give an explanation for the particular adjective or noun. Some of the adjectives are: 'eager', 'happy', 'surprised', etc. The infinitive here helps to give an opinion or explanation to the word.

- *She was happy **to see** him come home. (the infinitive 'to see' gives an explanation about why she was happy)*
- *This is not the time **to play**. (the infinitive 'to play' gives an opinion of the time that is not suitable for playing)*

Infinitive as a complement of a verb

The infinitive can also be the complement of a [verb](#).

- *Her greatest pleasure is **to sing**. (the infinitive 'to sing' is the complement of the verb*

Infinitive to show purpose

We can also use infinitives to say why we do something (thus, we use 'to' in place of a common phrase 'in order to' or the phrases like 'because I (she, he, we or they) wanted to do something).

- Why do people go to Paris?
  ... because they want to see the Eiffel Tower.
- *...**to see** the Eiffel Tower.*

- I went to the library...
  ... because I wanted to get a book.
- *... **to get** a book.*

Check out this video on 5 ways to use the infinitive:

Verb Patterns

When used after verbs, infinitives and gerunds can replace a noun as the object of a verb. Whether we use a gerund or an infinitive depends on the main verb in the sentence.

a) verb + -ing

After some verbs, we use **verb-ing**:

- *I **enjoy** go**ing** to the cinema.*
- *NOT: ~~I enjoy to go to the cinema.~~*

- *It was late when we **finished** watch**ing** the movie.*
- NOT: ~~It was late when we finished to watch the movie~~.

Some other verbs which follow this pattern are:

suggest	**like**	**love**	**stop**
finish	**keep**	**avoid**	**hate**
	mind	**enjoy**	

- *I **hate** listen**ing** to rap music.*
- *It didn't **stop** rain**ing** all day.*

b) to + infinitive

After other verbs, we use **to + infinitive**:

- *We **wanted to relax** on holiday.*
- NOT: ~~We wanted relaxing on holiday.~~

- *We **decided to go** to Greece.*
- NOT: ~~We decided going to Greece.~~

Some other verbs which follow this pattern are:

choose	**forget**	**help**	**decide**
hope	**need**	**plan**	**want**
promise	**try**	**would like**	**learn**

- *We **hope to go** there again next year.*
- *I **promised to buy** a present for my sister.*

In the negative, we use '**not to**...':

- *We **tried not to drink** too much ouzo.*

Read more about using gerunds and infinitives in this article:

[Verb patterns: Gerund vs Infinitive](#)

See also:

[Verbs: the Infinitive](#)