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):

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

afford  
We cannot afford to hesitate.

agree  
The professors agreed to disagree.

appear  
The results appear to support your theory.

arrange  
They had arranged to meet at noon.

beg  
I beg to differ with you.

care  
Would you care to respond?

claim  
She claims to have new data.

consent  
Will you consent to run for office?

decide  
When did he decide to withdraw?

demand  
I demand to see the results of the survey.

deserve  
She deserves to have a fair hearing.

expect  
The committee expects to decide by tomorrow.

fail  
The trial failed to confirm his hypothesis.

hesitate  
I hesitate to try the experiment again.

hope  
What do you hope to accomplish?

learn  
We have learned to proceed with caution.

manage  
How did she manage to find the solution?

neglect  
The author neglected to provide an index.

need  
Do we need to find new subjects?

offer  
We could offer to change the time of the meeting.

plan  
They had planned to attend the conference.

prepare  
He was not prepared to give a lecture.

pretend  
I do not pretend to know the answer.

promise  
They promise to demonstrate the new equipment.

refuse  
She refused to cooperate any longer.

seem  
Something seems to be wrong with your design.

struggle  
We struggled to understand her point of view.

swear  
He swears to tell the truth.

threaten  
The team threatened to stop their research.

volunteer  
Will you volunteer to lead the group?

wait  
We could not wait to hear the outcome.

want  
She did not want to go first.

wish  
Do you wish to participate?

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 to writing his paper.  \[\text{PREPOSITION + GERUND}\]
I used to live in Mexico.  \[\text{AUXILIARY + VERB}\]
I want to go home.  \[\text{VERB + INFINITIVE}\]

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:

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