

Gerunds or Infinitives

Some verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives. Sometimes there is no significant difference in meaning between a sentence with a gerund and a sentence with an infinitive.

He began **humming**.

He began **to hum**.

The most common verbs falling into this category are the following three verbs dealing with time:

begin continue start

The verb *stop*, however, is used to express two different meanings.

We stopped singing. [The singing has ended.]

We stopped to sing. [The singing has not started yet.]

After verbs dealing with emotion, the gerund is generally used to express the vividness of an action, an event, or a state or to indicate its actual occurrence. The infinitive usually indicates a future, potential, or hypothetical action, event, or state.

I usually prefer **cooking** my own food, but tonight I would prefer **to go** out.

The following verbs fall into this category:

hate like love prefer

Some verbs dealing with memory signal different time sequences, depending on whether a gerund or an infinitive is used.

I remember **locking** the door. [The door was locked; then the action of locking was remembered.]

I remembered **to lock** the door. [The remembering of a responsibility took place before the action of locking was performed.]

The following verbs fall into this category:

remember forget regret

exercise

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Underline the gerund or infinitive. Circle the reason that the gerund or the infinitive is used. If either a gerund or infinitive could be used, circle "No significant change in meaning."

1. It started to rain.

Memory of action

Vivid depiction

No significant change in meaning

2. I remembered to bring a lunch.

Memory to perform action

Vivid depiction

No significant change in meaning

3. He regretted quitting that job.

Memory of action

Memory to perform action

Vivid depiction

4. They continued to talk during the entire movie.

Actual occurrence

Vivid depiction

No significant change in meaning

5. My friends and I love going to the beach.

Memory of action

Vivid depiction

No significant change in meaning

6. I would hate to clean up that mess.

Actual occurrence

Hypothetical occurrence

Vivid depiction

7. Laxmi remembers returning the books to the library.

Memory of action

Memory to perform action

Vivid depiction

8. My neighbors like throwing huge parties.

Actual occurrence

Vivid depiction

Potential occurrence

9. The car began to make strange noises.

Actual occurrence

Vivid depiction

No significant change in meaning

10. I prefer to take classes at night.

Vivid depiction

Potential occurrence

No significant change in meaning