



Infinitives and Gerunds

Infinitives

An infinitive is the “to” form of the verb. (Example: She loves to cook. – “to cook” is the infinitive form of the verb “cook”.) Similar to gerunds, infinitives can also be used as the subject or the object of a sentence. (Example: To save for a rainy day is essential. – “To save” is the subject.; She wants to dance. – “to dance” is the object.)

Bare infinitives

The verbs you find in a dictionary. (Examples: go, play, fry, sprinkle, etc.)

Whole Infinitives

A whole infinitive has two parts: “to” and a bare infinitive. (Example: to fish, to research, to educate, etc.)

Split Infinitives

There is an old rule, based on Latin, that whole infinitives should not be split. A split infinitive is when an adverb comes between “to” and the verb. (Example: to really admire, to generously give, to angrily shout, etc.) The rule that whole infinitives should not be split is not followed as strictly today, however, it is best to avoid splitting infinitives in formal writing. (Example: Instead of saying “This paper aims to accurately summarize research findings” say “This paper aims to provide an accurate summary of research findings” or “This paper provides an accurate summary of research findings.”)

Gerunds

A gerund is a noun made from a verb by adding “-ing.” You can use a gerund as the subject or the object of a sentence. (Example: Advertising increases product sales. – “Advertising” is the subject; This company provides advertising. – “Advertising” is the object.)

Gerunds vs. Infinitives

As the SUBJECT of a sentence, gerunds sound more natural than infinitives. (Example: Shopping is her favourite hobby. – This sounds more natural than “To shop is her favourite hobby.”) For objects of a sentence, the main verb in a sentence determines whether you use a gerund or an infinitive. (Example: Lucy enjoys driving. – “enjoys” does not need “to” after it, so a gerund is used.) Verbs such as “like” and



“want” are usually followed by “to” so infinitives should be used. (Example: My friends want to see a movie.)