Finite and non-finite verbs

There are mainly two types of verbs in English – finite and non-finite. Finite verbs change their forms when there is a change in the number or person of the subject. Finite verbs also have different forms in different tenses.

Non-finite verbs do not change their form when the number or person of the subject changes. There are mainly three types of non-finite verbs: infinitives, gerunds and participles.

Can you identify finite and non-finite verbs? Test your understanding with this grammar exercise.

In the following sentences, state whether the verb given in the inverted commas is finite or non-finite.

1. My little brother 'wants' to be an actor.
   finite
   non-finite

2. She worked hard 'to pass' the test.
   finite
   non-finite

3. I 'couldn’t solve' the problem.
   finite
   non-finite
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4. 'To err' is human.
finite
non-finite

5. Your duty is 'to cross' the river without getting noticed.
finite
non-finite

6. The doctor 'is attending' to the injured people.
finite
non-finite

7. She 'opened' the door.
finite
non-finite

8. The students were asked 'to submit' their assignments by Friday.
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9. The teacher 'encouraged' the students to work hard.

10. The dog 'wagged' its tail to show its happiness.

Answers
1. My little brother wants to be an actor. (wants – finite; to be – non-finite)
2. She worked hard to pass the test. (worked – finite; to pass – non-finite)
3. I couldn’t solve the problem. (couldn’t solve – finite)
4. To err is human. (to err – non-finite; is – finite)
5. Your duty is to cross the river without getting noticed. (is – finite; to cross – non-finite;
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getting – non-finite)

6. The doctor is attending to the injured people. (is attending – finite)

7. She opened the door. (opened – finite)

8. The students were asked to submit their assignments by Friday. (were asked – finite; to submit – non-finite)

9. The teacher encouraged the students to work hard. (encouraged – finite; to work – non-finite)

10. The dog wagged its tail to show its happiness. (wagged – finite; to show – non-finite)