The infinitive

The infinitive is the base form of a verb. Examples are: write, run, break, read, walk etc.

The infinitive may be preceded by the marker to. It is then called the to-infinitive.

Examples of to-infinitives are given below:

I want to go.
Birds love to sing.
To err is human.
He refused to go.

Uses of the infinitive

The infinitive can be the subject of a verb.
To err is human; to forgive divine.
To find fault with others is easy.
In sentence 1, the infinitive to err is the subject of the verb is. In sentence 2, the infinitive phrase to find fault with others is the subject of the verb is.

As the object of the verb

The infinitive can be the object of a verb. Study the following examples.
He wants to go.
She likes to sing.
In sentence 1, the infinitive to go is the object of the verb wants. Similarly in sentence 2, the infinitive to sing is the object of the verb likes.

As subject complements

The infinitive can also be used as the complement of the subject. Study the following sentences:
The mistake she made was to get his attention.
The best thing to do now is to retreat.
In sentence 1, the infinitive to get is the complement of the subject mistake. In sentence 2, the infinitive to retreat is the complement of the subject thing.

As an adjective qualifying a noun

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The infinitive

The infinitive can function like an adjective.
That was a place to visit.
It is time to go.
Here the infinitives to visit and to go function like adjectives modifying the nouns place and time.
The forms of the infinitive

The infinitive has the following forms:

Simple present

Active: to write; passive: to be written

Present perfect

Active: to have written; passive: to have been written

Present continuous

Active: to be writing; no passive form

Present perfect continuous

Active: to have been writing; no passive form