

-ing form or infinitive - part II

See, watch and hear

After these verbs, an -ing form refers to an action in progress. An infinitive refers to a completed action. Note that these verbs are followed by an infinitive without to.

When I looked out, I saw him crossing the road. (He was in the middle of the action.)

I saw him get off the bus, cross the road and disappear in the crowd. (I watched the whole action.)

Try

Try + -ing form is used to talk about making an experiment.

'Susie is in a foul mood.' 'Try sending her some flowers.'

Try + infinitive is used to talk about making an effort to do something difficult.

I tried to stand up, but I couldn't.

Like, love, hate and prefer

After these four verbs, infinitives and -ing forms have similar meanings.

I like reading detective novels.

I like to read detective novels.

I hate working late in the evening.

I hate to work late in the evening.

After would like, would love, would prefer and would hate, infinitives are more common than -ing forms.

I would like to know what my duty is. (NOT I would like knowing what my duty is.)

Afraid

Afraid of + -ing form is used to talk about fear of things that happen accidentally.

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I didn't make any noise, because I was afraid of waking the children.

In other cases afraid can be followed by an infinitive or -ing form with no difference in meaning.

I am not afraid of telling the truth. OR I am not afraid to tell the truth.