

Sentence patterns using to-infinitives

A knowledge common sentence patterns is essential to use English correctly. In a sentence, words are arranged in a particular order. This order in which words appear in a sentence is called the pattern of that sentence. There are several sentence patterns in English. If you are serious about learning English, you must have a decent understanding of all of these patterns.

All of you must be familiar with the pattern subject + verb + object. This is one of the most fundamental sentence patterns in English. As you know, the object of a verb is usually a noun or a pronoun. Several other words and structures that act like nouns can also be used as objects. For example, infinitives can be used as objects. In this lesson we will learn about some sentence patterns with to-infinitives.

Subject + verb + question word + to-infinitive

In this structure the phrase containing the question word and the to-infinitive acts as the direct object of the verb.

I don't know what to do. (Here the phrase what to do is the object of the verb know.)

We have been told where to stay. (Here the phrase where to stay is the object of the verb told.)

I'll enquire how to reach there. (Here the phrase how to reach there is the object of the verb enquire.)

Let's decide when to start.

Subject + verb + indirect object + question word + to-infinitive

The verbs used in this structure take two objects - a direct object and an indirect object. The indirect object is usually a person. The direct object is a phrase containing a question word and a to-infinitive.

I taught him how to answer that question. (Here the pronoun him is the indirect object of the verb taught whereas the phrase how to answer that question is the direct object.)

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She told me what to do.

Tell me how to operate the washing machine.

Can you advise the boy how to behave?