

Verb terminology

While learning about verbs, you will come across grammatical terms like infinitives and gerunds. Below are explanations of these frequently used grammar terms.

Infinitives

The infinitive is the base form of the verb. It is sometimes preceded by the marker *to* and then it is called the *to*-infinitive. Remember that that *'to'* is not a part of the infinitive and the infinitive can also be used without *to*.

Read the examples given below.

She wants to go. (Here the phrase *'to go'* is an example of a *to*-infinitive.)

She made me cry. (Here the infinitive *'cry'* is used without the marker *to*.)

The infinitive is a non-finite verb. In other words, it does not change its form when the number or person of the subject changes.

She wants to leave.

I want to leave.

They want to leave.

John wants to leave.

As you can see the infinitive *'to leave'* remains the same regardless of the change in the number and the person of the subject. Non-finite verbs cannot act as principal verbs.

The gerunds

A gerund is a verb form ending in *-ing*. Gerunds are non-finite verbs. A gerund can be the subject or object of a verb. It can also act as the object of a preposition.

Smoking can cause cancer. (Here the gerund *smoking* acts as the subject of the verb.)

We don't allow smoking in the kitchen. (Here the gerund *smoking* acts as the object of the verb *allow*.)

A gerund can also act as the object of a preposition.

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I am thinking of taking a break. (Here the gerund taking is the object of the preposition of.)
Remember that only -ing forms can be used after a preposition. Infinitives are not possible.

She is confident of winning. (NOT She is confident of to win.) (NOT She is confident to win.)