

Gerunds and Infinitives: Meaning Changes & Preferences

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: remember / regret / go on, try to do vs try doing, like/love/hate patterns, would like, and specific verb patterns.

At the B1 level, knowing whether to use the **Gerund** (-ing) or the **Infinitive** (to ...) depends on the main verb. Some verbs change their meaning completely depending on which form you choose.

1. Verbs with Meaning Changes

These verbs can be followed by both forms, but the meaning changes significantly.

Verb	Verb + -ing (Gerund)	Verb + to ... (Infinitive)
Remember	Memory of the past. <i>I remember locking the door. (I did it, and I have the memory now).</i>	Task / Duty. <i>Please remember to lock the door. (Don't forget to do it).</i>
Regret	Feeling sorry about the past. <i>I regret telling him the secret.</i>	Formal bad news. <i>We regret to inform you that the train is delayed.</i>
Stop	Quit an activity. <i>He stopped smoking last year.</i>	Pause to do something else. <i>We stopped to buy lunch. (We paused our journey to buy food).</i>
Try	Experiment / Solution. <i>The room is hot. Try opening the window. (See if it helps).</i>	Attempt something difficult. <i>I tried to open the window, but it was stuck. (Effort).</i>
Go on	Continue the same action. <i>He went on talking for hours.</i>	Change to a new action. <i>After the intro, he went on to explain the rules.</i>

2. Liking and Preferences

How we express what we like depends on whether it is a general feeling or a specific situation.

A. General Feelings (Like / Love / Hate / Prefer)

- **Gerund (-ing):** Focus on the experience or enjoyment.
 - *I love swimming in the ocean. (I enjoy it).*
- **Infinitive (to ...):** Focus on a habit, choice, or good idea.
 - *I like to pay my bills on time. (It's not "fun," but I think it is good to do).*

B. Specific Preferences (Would like / Would love / Would prefer)

- When we use **would**, we ALWAYS use the **Infinitive**.
 - *I would like to come to the party. (NOT: I would like coming).*
 - *I would love to see you.*

3. Fixed Patterns

Some verbs generally take only one form.

- **Followed by -ing:** *enjoy, mind, finish, avoid, suggest, miss, practice.*
 - *I enjoy reading.*
- **Followed by to ...:** *want, decide, promise, hope, offer, plan, afford.*
 - *I decided to go home.*
- **Start / Begin / Continue:** Usually take both with **no difference** in meaning.
 - *It started raining. = It started to rain.*

Practice Exercises

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verb.

Instructions:

- Fill in the blanks with the correct form: **Gerund** (doing) or **Infinitive** (to do).
- Pay attention to cues for **Negatives** (not/verb) and **Questions** (subject/verb).
- Consider if the meaning changes based on the context!

1. I distinctly remember _____ (meet) him at the conference last year.
2. _____ (you/would like/join) us for dinner tonight?
3. The room was freezing, so she tried _____ (close) the window, but the handle was broken.
4. I regret _____ (inform) you that your application has been rejected.
5. Please stop _____ (check) your phone! It is very rude.
6. She promised _____ (not/be) late for the meeting again.
7. _____ (you/mind/wait) outside for a few minutes?
8. After discussing the budget, the CEO went on _____ (talk) about the new marketing strategy.
9. I usually like _____ (clean) the kitchen immediately after cooking so it doesn't get dirty.
10. We were driving to LA, but we stopped _____ (take) some photos of the sunset.
11. I don't regret _____ (move) to a new city; it was a great experience.
12. Why _____ (he/refuse/eat) his vegetables?
13. If your computer freezes, try _____ (restart) it. That usually fixes the problem.
14. He admitted his mistake and _____ (avoid/make) eye contact.
15. Did you remember _____ (buy) milk, or do I need to go to the store?

Answer Key

1. **meeting** (Past memory)
2. **Would you like to join** (Specific preference)
3. **to close** (Attempting something difficult)
4. **to inform** (Formal bad news)
5. **checking** (Quit the action)
6. **not to be** (Promise + infinitive)
7. **Do you mind waiting** (Mind + gerund)
8. **to talk** (Change to a new topic/action)
9. **to clean** (Habitual choice/good idea)
10. **to take** (Stopped in order to do something else)
11. **moving** (Feeling about the past)
12. **did he refuse to eat** (Refuse + infinitive)
13. **restarting** (Experiment/Solution)
14. **avoided making** (Avoid + gerund)
15. **to buy** (Task/Duty)