

Focus: Verb-ing after prepositions, Common collocations, Time linkers (Before/After), and Method (By/Without)

In English, if a verb follows a preposition, it must be in the **Gerund (-ing)** form. This applies to fixed expressions, time phrases, and describing how we do things.

1. The General Rule

When a verb comes immediately after a preposition (in, at, on, of, for, about, etc.), you must use the **-ing** form.

- **Pattern:** Preposition + **Verb-ing**
- **Example:** She left **without saying** goodbye. (NOT: ~~without to say~~ / ~~without say~~)

Note on Negatives: To make the gerund negative, place **not** before the gerund.

- **Example:** I apologize **for not calling** you sooner.

2. Common Adjective + Preposition Collocations

Many adjectives are always followed by a specific preposition.

Adjective	Preposition	Example
Interested	in	Are you interested in buying this car?
Good / Bad	at	He is good at fixing computers.
Fed up	with	I am fed up with waiting for the bus.
Afraid	of	She is afraid of walking alone at night.
Excited	about	We are excited about going on holiday.
Worried	about	Stop worrying about failing the test.

3. Chronological Structures (Time)

We can use **Before** and **After** as prepositions to combine two sentences.

- **Before + -ing:** Replaces "Before I [verb]..."
 - *Full Sentence:* Before I go to sleep, I read a book.
 - *With Gerund:* **Before going** to sleep, I read a book.
- **After + -ing:** Replaces "After I [verb]..."
 - *Full Sentence:* After he finished work, he went home.
 - *With Gerund:* **After finishing** work, he went home.

4. Method and Exclusion (How?)

We use specific prepositions to explain **how** something happened or what did **not** happen.

- **By + -ing:** Shows the **method** or means (How did you do it?).
 - *Example:* You can improve your English **by watching** movies.
- **Without + -ing:** Shows **exclusion** (doing one thing while avoiding another).
 - *Example:* He solved the problem **without asking** for help.

Practice Exercises

Instructions

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verb in parentheses.

- Remember to use the **-ing** form.
- Pay attention to **negative cues** (not/verb).

1. I am really interested in _____ (learn) how to play the guitar.
2. She walked out of the meeting without _____ (say) a word.
3. _____ (you/think) about moving to a new city soon?
4. After _____ (complete) his degree, Mark wants to travel the world.
5. I am sorry for _____ (not/reply) to your email yesterday.
6. You can start the machine by _____ (press) the red button.
7. Are you afraid of _____ (lose) your job?
8. We are fed up with _____ (wait) for the train every morning.
9. Before _____ (leave) the house, please check if the windows are closed.
10. How _____ (he/manage) to fix the car without tools?
11. He is not very good at _____ (keep) secrets.
12. They succeeded by _____ (not/give up) when things got difficult.
13. Is she excited about _____ (start) her new job?
14. You shouldn't drive for five hours without _____ (take) a break.
15. _____ (they/plan) on staying for dinner tonight?

Answer Key

1. **learning** (Adjective + Preposition)
2. **saying** (Exclusion: Without + -ing)
3. **Are you thinking** (Question: Present Continuous with *about* + -ing implied if followed by object, but here the blank tests the continuous tense or the structure. *Note: If the student wrote "Do you think about moving", it is also acceptable.*)
4. **completing** (Time: After + -ing)
5. **not replying** (Negative Gerund: for + not + -ing)
6. **pressing** (Method: By + -ing)
7. **losing** (Adjective + Preposition)
8. **waiting** (Adjective + Preposition)
9. **leaving** (Time: Before + -ing)
10. **did he manage** (Question structure: The blank focuses on the main verb clause here, context implies past or present. *Alternative valid answer: does he manage*)
11. **keeping** (Adjective + Preposition)
12. **not giving up** (Method/Negative: by + not + -ing)
13. **starting** (Adjective + Preposition)
14. **taking** (Exclusion: Without + -ing)
15. **Are they planning** (Question: Present Continuous. *Note: "Do they plan" is also acceptable.*)