

The infinitive is the base of a verb. They usually refer to the present infinitive, which is most common. There are four other forms of infinitives – the perfect infinitive, perfect continuous infinitive, continuous infinitive, and the passive infinitive. For instance;

To err is human.

She refused **to obey** the orders.

Many men desire **to make** money quickly.

It will be seen that the infinitive is a kind of noun with certain features of the verb, especially that of taking an object (when the verb is transitive) and adverbial qualifiers. In short, the infinitive is a Verb-Noun.

The word **to** is frequently used with the infinitive, but is not an essential part or sign of it. Thus, after certain verbs (bid, let, make, hear), we use the infinitive without 'to'. For instance, in the following statements;

I saw her *do* it.

Let her *sit* here.

I made him *run*.

I bade her *go*.

The infinitive without 'to' is also used after the verbs 'will, would, should, shall, might, may, could, can and must'. Consider the following examples;

She will *pay* the bill.

He *should* work harder.

You *must* come to the office at nine tomorrow.

Verbs Followed by an Infinitive

She agreed to speak before the game.

agree	consent	have	offer	shoot
aim	continue	hesitate	ought	start
appear	dare	hope	plan	stop
arrange	decide	hurry	prefer	strive
ask	deserve	intend	prepare	swear
attempt	detest	leap	proceed	threaten
be able	dislike	leave	promise	try
beg	expect	like	propose	use
begin	fail	long	refuse	wait
care	forget	love	remember	want
choose	get	mean	say	wish
condescend	happen	neglect		

Uses of Infinitives:

The infinitives may be used like a noun, with or without adjuncts in the following cases, it is known as simple infinitive:

1. As the subject of a verb in a sentence. For instance;

To *find* fault is easy.

To *err* is human.

2. As the complement of a verb, the infinitive can be used. For instance;

His greatest pleasure is *to sing*.

Her custom is *to ride* daily.

3. As the object of a transitive verb. Such as;

I do not mean *to read*.

She likes *to play* cards.

4. As the object of a preposition, the infinitives are used. For example;

She had no choice but *to obey*. (here, but means 'except')

The speaker is about *to begin*.

5. As an objective complement, infinitives are used. For instance in the following sentence;

She saw him *go*.

When the infinitive is used in following ways, it is known as the Gerundial or Qualifying Infinitive:

1. To qualify a verb, usually to express a purpose. Such as in the following examples;

She called *to see* my brother. (means for the purpose of seeing my brother).

I come *to bury* Caesar.(indicates the purpose).

2. To qualify an Adjective, as indicated in the following examples;

Prunes are good *to eat*.

The girls are anxious *to learn*.

3. To qualify a sentence, infinitives are used, as shown in examples below;

To tell the truth, I quite forgot my promise.

She was petrified, so *to speak*.

4. To qualify a noun, infinitives are used in following manner;

She is a woman *to be admired*.

You will have cause *to repent*.

The infinitives can be active or passive. When infinitive is used as **active**, it may have a present and a perfect form. And may merely name the act, or represent continued action. For instance;

- Present : 'to love'
- Perfect: 'to have loved'
- Present Continuous: 'to be loving'
- Perfect Continuous: 'to have been loving'

As Passive, the infinitives have a present and a perfect form only. For example;

- Present: 'to be loved'
- Perfect: 'to have been loved'



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