

What is the Infinitive?

The infinitive of a verb is its basic form with or without the particle *to*:

Examples:

- '**do**' or '**to do**'
- '**be**' or '**to be**'

The infinitive without **to** is called **bare infinitive** ('do', 'be').

The infinitive with **to** is called **full infinitive** ('to do', 'to be').

The bare infinitive

1. The bare infinitive is used as the main verb after the dummy auxiliary verb *do*, or most modal auxiliary verbs (such as *will*, *can*, or *should*).

Examples:

I do **know** him.

I do **like** you.

I can **do** it .

2. Several common verbs of perception, including *see*, *watch*, *hear*, *feel*, and *sense* take a direct object and a bare infinitive.

Examples:

I saw it **happen**.

I watched it **happen**.

3. The bare infinitive is also used with several common verbs of permission or causation, including *make*, *bid*, *let*, and *have*.

Example:

I made/bade/let/had him **do** it.

4. However, *make* takes a to-infinitive in the passive voice.

I was made **to do** it.

The bare infinitive is also used after *had better*.

Example:

You had better **leave** now.

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5. The verb *help* is followed by the bare infinitive.

Example:

He helped them **do** it. ("He helped them **to do**" it is also possible).

6. With the word *why*.

Example:

Why **say** it?

The full infinitive

The full infinitive is used as follows:

- The full infinitive can function as a noun phrase. In this case it is used as follows:

As a subject

Example:

To err is human, **to forgive** is divine.

As an object

Example:

I intended **to marry** her.

He wanted **to know** the whole truth.

- It can also be used like an adjective or adverb.

Example:

This is the game **to watch**. (**To watch** functions as an adjective modifying the noun *game*).

This is the problem **to think about**. (**To think about** functions as an adjective modifying the noun 'the problem').

He went to his friend's house **to study**. (**To study** functions as an adverb answering the question why he went to his friend's house).

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He is ready **to go**. (**To go** functions as an adverb, modifying the adjective 'ready').

This is the game **to watch**. (**To watch** functions as an adjective, modifying *the noun game*).

This is the problem **to think about**. (**To think about** functions as an adjective modifying the noun 'the problem').

He went to his friend's house **to study**. (**To study** functions as an adverb answering the question why he went to his friend's house).

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This is the problem **to think about**. (**To think about** functions as an adjective modifying the noun 'the problem').

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He is ready **to go**. (**To go** functions as an adverb, modifying the adjective 'ready').

- It is used to mean "*in order to*" to express purpose.

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Examples:

You need to exercise regularly **to lose** weight. (...*in order to lose* weight).

He works hard **to earn** a lot of money. (...*in order to earn* a lot of money).