

# Infinitive

**Definition: Infinitive** – A word which is not limited by the person or number of the subject is known as an Infinitive. It, in fact, is a kind of noun having certain features of noun. So it is also treated as a verb-noun.

## Infinitive

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### Examples:

I love *to speak* English.

She likes *to swim*.

**Note:** A Finite verb is limited by the person or number of the subject.

### Examples:

I *love* music.

She *loves* music.

They *love* music.

## Use of Infinitive

As the subject of a verb.

### Examples:

*To advise others* is easy.

*To learn* English is difficult.

*To please Padma* is hard.

**Note:** These sentences must be written with a preparatory subject 'it'.

### Examples:

*It is easy to advise* others.

*It is difficult to learn* English.

*It is hard to please* Padma.

As the object of a transitive verb

### Examples:

I wish *to become a poet*.

He likes *to read books*.

We propose *to visit Agra*.

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As the complement of a verb

**Examples:**

Our greatest pleasure is *to help the poor*.

My ambition is *to marry her*.

Her plan is *to settle in Australia*.

As the object of a preposition

**Examples:**

I had no choice *but to give up my hope*.

We are *about to begin our work*.

As an object complement

**Examples:**

We heard him *speak to his father*.

We found her *open the door*.

I noticed Madhavi *smile at me*.

To qualify a verb to express purpose

**Examples:**

I wanted *to marry Padmaja*.

We have come to *see Madhavi*.

I read books *to increase my knowledge*.

To qualify an adjective

**Examples:**

We are very happy to sit in the garden.

It is hard *to please Padma*.

English is difficult *to learn*.

To qualify a noun

**Examples:**

It is not the time *to sleep*.

I have the letters *to post*.

She has a child *to look after*

To qualify a sentence

**Examples:**

*To tell the truth*, we have no problem with you.

*To explain bluntly*, we are in need of money.

*To tell you frankly*, I am not able to help you.

## Use of Bare Infinitive

Bare Infinitive is used with the following verbs:

bid	let	hear
watch	make	need
see	help	dare

**Examples:**

I *bade* him *go*

*Let* him speak.

She *made* me *understand* life.

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I **helped** her **learn** English.

I **heard** Madhavi **tell** her friend about me.

You **need** not **worry** about it.

She **dared** not **speak** with her father.

**Note:** Dare and need as principal verb used with 'to' Infinitive.

## Examples:

Did he **dare** to jump in the river?

We **need** two days to **finish** the work.

With Auxiliary Verbs

shall	may	do	dare
should	might	did	
will	can	must	
would	could	need	

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## Examples:

I **shall** go there.

You **should** know that.

She **will** pay the money.

They **would** help me.

You **may** do it tomorrow.

You **might** tell me the truth.

You **can** wait here.

She **could** explain the poem to me.

He **did** it well.

He **must** return the money.

With Certain Phrases

had better	sooner than
had rather	rather than

## Examples:

You **had better** consult a good doctor.

You **had rather** speak to her about it.

I **would rather** work hard than take rest.

With Certain Prepositions

For example, Except, but, than

## Examples:

Padma does nothing **except** blame others

I can do everything **but** understand her nature.

I would die **rather than** accept defeat.

**Note:** Bare Infinitives can be replaced by 'to' Infinitives.

## Examples:

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I can **teach**. (I am **able to teach**)

She bade me **wait**. (She asked me **to wait**)

Let me **tell** you something. (Allow me to **tell** you something)

I must **respect** her. (I ought **to respect** her or I am forced to **respect** her)

I will **punish** her. (I am determined to **punish** her)

## The Split Infinitive

It is generally treated wrong to split an Infinitive in the middle.

### Examples:

I expect Madhavi to carefully read the letter. (wrong)

I expect Madhavi to read the letter carefully. (right)

She tried to clearly explain the situation. (wrong)

She tried to explain clearly the situation. (right)

**Note:** The adverb can be used either before to or after the Infinitive.

Tense	Active voice	Passive Voice
Simple Present	To + verb	To + past participle (verb) To be written
Present Continuous	To be + present participle to be writing	
Present Perfect	To have + past participle to have written	To have been + past participle to have been written
Present Perfect continuous	To have been + present participle to have been writing	

## Infinitive Rules

### Rule 1

The **infinitive** without **to** is used after **auxiliary verbs** such as **shall, will, can, may, should, must**, etc. But **ought to** is an exception,

### Examples:

You **should** do your work.

He **can** win this match.

You **must** abide by law.

You **ought to** respect your elders.

### Rule 2

The **infinitive** without **to** is used after the verbs **did, let, make, need, dare, see, hear**, etc. except when **need** and **dare** are conjugated with 'to'.

### Examples:

I **bade** him **touch** your book.

I **made** him sit in the sun.

You **need not go** there.

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## Rule 3

Following are some of the verbs which are followed by **object + infinitive**, tell, order, invite, compel, allow, permit, teach, instruct, warn, urge, advise, tempt, encourage, request, forbid, show, remind, etc.

### Examples:

I *warned* him not *to touch* my books.

I *instructed* him not *to leave* the office.

I *advised* him not *to contest* the election.

He *ordered* me *to finish* the job.

## Rule 4

The **infinitive** without **to** is also used after *had better*, *had rather*, *would rather*, *sooner than*, *rather than*, *need not*, etc.

### Examples:

You *had rather take* rest.

You *had better get* your blood tested.

## Rule 5

The **infinitive** without **to** is used after the **prepositions** 'but' and 'than'.

### Examples:

He did nothing but *to laugh*. (Incorrect)

He did nothing but *laugh*. (Correct)

He did no more than *to laugh*. (Incorrect)

He did no more than *laugh*. (Correct)

## Rule 6

The **split infinitive**, that is the separation of '**to**' from its verb by inserting an **adverb** or **adverbial phrase** between the two is wrong, because '**to**' is regarded as part of the **verb**.

Hence, it should be placed immediately before the verb.

### Examples:

I went there *to* personally *see* the situation. (Incorrect)

I went there personally *to see* the situation. (Correct)

I request you to kindly *grant* my application. (Incorrect)

I request you kindly *to grant* my application. (Correct)

## Rule 7

It is not good English to leave '**to**' of the **infinitive** pendent, i.e., to put no verb after it, leaving the verb to be implied.

### Examples:

I will not go there unless I have *to*.

I did not stay there until I had *to*.

## Rule 8

The '**to**' of one **infinitive** can be made to do the duty for '**to**' of another **infinitive** if the verb in the two infinitives are synonymous.

### Examples:

He helped me to *progress and to prosper*. (Incorrect)

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He helped me **to progress and prosper**. (Correct)  
(Because progress and prosper are synonymous)

## Rule 9

But, if two separate ideas are expressed by two infinitives, '**to**' of the **latter infinitive** should not be omitted.

### Examples:

It lies in my power **to succeed or fail**. (Incorrect)  
It lies in my power **to succeed or to fail**. (Correct)  
We are advised **to rejoice** and **weep** with others. (Incorrect)  
We are advised **to rejoice** and **to weep** with others. (Correct)

## Rule 10

**An infinitive** should be in **present tense** unless it represents an action prior to the action of the **principal verb**.

### Examples:

I should have **liked to have gone**. (Incorrect)  
I should have **like to go**. (Correct)  
He seemed **to enjoy** his stay in Mumbai. (Incorrect)  
He seemed **to have enjoyed** his stay in Mumbai. (Correct)

## Rule 11

When the **infinitive** is made to qualify a **noun**, it must be accompanied by the same preposition that it would have taken if the verbs were finite.

### Examples:

I gave him a pen **to write**. (Incorrect)  
I gave him a pen **to write with**. (Correct)  
He has no paper **to write**. (Incorrect)  
He has no paper **to write on**. (Correct)

## Verb Infinitive Exercise

*Combine the following pairs of sentences by using infinitive.*

1. I have a lot of work.  
I must do it now.
2. He has three daughters.  
He must look after them.
3. I have some more letters.  
I should write them tonight.
4. The postman must deliver the letters.  
It is his duty.
5. I must become a writer.  
It is my aim in life.

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6. I must know her name.  
I don't know how I should know it.
7. She may be waiting for a friend  
She seemed in the way.
8. I should help the poor.  
That was my only ambition
9. She was my wife.  
Everyone supposed it so.
10. My wife must be educated  
I prefer it.
11. He must give up smoking.  
I advised him about it.
12. She must tell me the truth.  
I told her so.
13. He recovered from his illness.  
I knew this.  
I felt very happy for that.
14. Scientists should devise new things.  
It is their primary duty.
15. Type this letter.  
It is your duty.

