

## ***Working or To Work—Which Follows the Verb?***

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Have you ever wondered why some verbs in English are followed by the infinitive (*to work*), some are followed by the gerund (*working*), and some are correct either way? For example, why is it correct to say “I enjoy **working** at home,” but incorrect to say “I enjoy **to work** at home”?

In contrast, if we use the verb “like,” both forms are correct: a) “I like **to work** at home.” b) “I like **working** at home.” Unfortunately, there is no grammar rule (or logic rule) for why some verbs are followed by the infinitive, some are followed by the gerund, and some can be followed by either. The following tips demonstrate some common instances of gerund and infinitive usage in business contexts. At the end are references and exercises to improve your knowledge.

### **Use only the infinitive after these verbs.**

- **decide.** They have decided **to fund** the project.
- **refuse.** The group may refuse **to support** the changes.
- **expect.** We expected **to learn** the reasons for the delay at our last meeting.
- **offer.** Yesterday he offered **to comply** with the regulations.
- **agree.** Please agree **to report** the results on time.

### **Use only the gerund after these verbs.**

- **discuss.** They’ve discussed **postponing** the deadline.
- **quit.** The team will quit **auditing** the books in January.
- **recommend.** The review team should recommend **revising** the program.
- **avoid.** He was avoiding **answering** our questions before he saw the report.
- **put off.** Let’s put off **replying** until we review the budget.

*NOTE: Many verbs with a preposition are followed by the gerund. (talk about, look into)*

### **Use the infinitive or gerund with no change in meaning.**

- **advise.** He advised me **to hire** someone in May. He advised **hiring** someone in May.
- **continue.** They’ve continued **to fund** it. They’ve continued **funding** it.
- **start.** I started **to explain** the results today. I started **explaining** the results today.

*Note: Use the infinitive with the progressive tense. Example: I was starting to explain the results, when he interrupted.*

### **Infinitive or gerund changes the meaning with these verbs.**

- **try.** I tried **to understand** the explanation. (made an effort)

I tried **rereading** the explanation, but that didn't help. (experimented with a new approach)

- **regret**. I regret **to tell** him about the results. (regret to give someone bad news)  
I regret **lending** them money. They never paid it back. (regret a past action)

## Not sure which to use infinitive or gerund?

- Check [Longman's Online Dictionary](#). Review in Longman's the following examples of changes in meaning by clicking the link:
  - [stop](#) Look at the photos below. Check definition numbers 2b and 3.
  - [remember](#) Check definition numbers 1 and 3.
- **Strengthen your infinitive and gerund knowledge through practice.**
  - [Cloze exercise](#). Read the paragraph and type in the correct form. Use the "cheat" button if you need help.
  - [Multiple choice exercises](#). Choose your level: basic, intermediate or advanced. Select the correct answer. Review the tutorials and word lists.
  - [Test yourself](#). Review the detailed tutorials and exercises ranked by difficulty. Choose your level (1-4) before completing the tests.

	
He stopped <b>to answer</b> questions. <a href="#">Longman's #3 (pause to do something)</a>	He stopped <b>answering</b> questions. <a href="#">Longman's #2b (not continue)</a>