

The Verbal and the Verbal Phrase

The following sentences include verbals. “Writing a letter is a way *to talk* to a friend. The friend *receiving* your message will be happy *to hear* from you.”

A *verbal* is a verb form that is used as a noun or an adjective in a sentence. The three kinds of verbals are *infinitives*, *gerunds*, and *participles*.

An *infinitive* is a verb form made up of the word *to* plus a verb. It is usually used as a noun, but it may be used as an adjective or adverb. A *gerund* is a verb form that ends in *-ing* and is used as a noun. A *participle* is a verb form that is used as an adjective. It describes a noun or a pronoun. There are present and past participles.

In this chapter, you will learn about verbals and their purpose in sentences.

Goals for Learning

- ▶ To identify and use infinitives and infinitive phrases in sentences
- ▶ To identify and use gerunds and gerund phrases in sentences
- ▶ To identify and use participles and participial phrases in sentences

Infinitive

A verbal that begins with the word *to*.

An infinitive can act as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb in a sentence.

An **infinitive** is a verb form made up of the word *to* plus a verb. It is usually used as a noun, but it may be used as an adjective or adverb.

EXAMPLES

Noun: I like **to swim**.

Adverb: He practices **to improve**.

Adjective: There was plenty of food **to eat**.

An infinitive is usually in the present tense. It can also be in the present perfect tense (*to + have + a verb*).

EXAMPLES

Present: Ella and Julian decided **to go** to the lake.

Present perfect: They hoped **to have caught** ten fish by noon.

Activity A Write the infinitives in these sentences on your paper.

- 1) Ella and Julian really like to fish.
- 2) They hoped to catch enough fish for dinner.
- 3) Ella agreed to clean the fish.
- 4) Julian said he would like to cook the fish over an open fire.
- 5) Ella and Julian were on the lake by seven o'clock, ready to make their first cast.

An infinitive is not a part of the main verb or verb phrase. It may, however, be part of the complete predicate. Remember that the complete predicate is the main verb and all the words that describe that verb.

EXAMPLE

Verb	Infinitive	Adverb
Claudia / decided to leave early.		
Subject	Complete Predicate	

Activity B Write the complete predicate in each of these sentences. Underline the verb or verb phrase. Circle the infinitive.

- 1) Donna appeared to be happy.
- 2) Where do you like to go on vacation?
- 3) Sam seems to be taller than Fred.
- 4) Connie hoped to get the lead in the play.
- 5) Do you want to use the computer?

Do not confuse infinitives with prepositional phrases. An infinitive is *to* + a verb. A prepositional phrase is *to* + a noun or pronoun.

EXAMPLE

Infinitive: They want **to leave**. (*Leave* is a verb.)
Prepositional phrase: Let's go **to the lake**. (*Lake* is a noun and the object of the preposition *to*.)

Activity C Write the words in bold in these sentences. Beside each group of words, write whether they are an *infinitive* or a *prepositional phrase*.

Example They wanted **to leave** early.
to leave—infinitive

- 1) When Ella and Julian got **to the lake**, they saw other people ready **to fish**.
- 2) They carried their equipment **to the boat**.
- 3) Soon they were ready **to begin**.
- 4) Julian always wanted **to be** the one **to catch** the first fish.
- 5) "Do you hope **to beat** the champion?" Ella said **to Julian**.
- 6) "I hope **to catch** at least one big one by ten o'clock," said Julian.
- 7) They said hello **to the other boaters**.
- 8) "Look!" Ella pointed **to another boat**.
- 9) "That man just started **to reel** in his line."
- 10) "He will need a big pan **to cook** that fish!"

Although an infinitive is a verb form, it can be used as a noun, an adverb, or an adjective in a sentence.

Study each sentence pattern to figure out how an infinitive is used in a sentence. Ask yourself the same kinds of questions you ask to identify parts of speech and sentence parts.

EXAMPLES

Noun: Julian wants **to catch** a big fish.
(What thing does Julian want?)

Adverb: He will need a big pan **to cook** his fish.
(Why does he need a big pan?)

Adjective: Ella had plenty of bait **to use**.
(What kind of bait does Ella have?)

Activity D Write the infinitives in bold in these sentences on your paper. Beside each infinitive, write whether it is used as a *noun*, an *adverb*, or an *adjective*. Remember that subjects, predicate nominatives, and direct objects are nouns.

- 1) **To catch** a big fish was Julian's ambition.
- 2) His greatest hope was **to reel** in a big one.
- 3) After an hour, they decided **to move** to another spot.
- 4) They hoped **to find** a place with some fish.
- 5) They tried **to stay** cheerful.
- 6) The fish were hard **to catch**.
- 7) "Even a little fish would be nice **to see** right now!"
- 8) "Hey! My time **to pull** in the big one has come!"

Infinitive phrase

A phrase that includes the infinitive plus all the words and phrases that go with the infinitive.

An **infinitive phrase** is an infinitive plus any adverb, adverb phrase, or complement it may have.

An infinitive may have an adverb or an adverb phrase to answer questions about its action.

EXAMPLE

Inf. Adv. Adv. Phrase

To leave early for the lake was the plan.
 (The entire infinitive phrase is *to leave early for the lake*. *Early* is an adverb that answers the question *When?* *For the lake* is a prepositional phrase that tells about *early*. It answers the question *Where?*)

An infinitive may also have a complement. It may have a direct object, a predicate nominative, or a predicate adjective.

EXAMPLES

Inf. D.O.

He wanted to find a job.
 (*Job* is the direct object of the infinitive *to find*.)

Inf. P.N.

She wants to be the president.
 (*President* is the predicate nominative. It follows the linking verb *to be*.)

Inf. Pred. Adj.

They wanted the dinner to taste good.
 (*Good* is a predicate adjective that follows the linking verb *to taste*. The infinitive *to taste* also acts as an objective complement that tells about the direct object *dinner*.)

Activity E Write the whole infinitive phrase in each of these sentences on your paper.

- 1) Julian began to reel the fish into the boat.
- 2) The fish started to fight hard.
- 3) Julian's fish struggled to win the battle.
- 4) Ella got a net to help Julian.
- 5) To land that fish was their goal.

Sometimes the preposition *to* is missing from the infinitive.

EXAMPLES

"Don't make me (to) laugh," shouted Ella.

Help me (to) reel it in.

Activity F Write the infinitive in each of these sentences on your paper.

- 1) Will you let me help you?
- 2) They heard the other boaters cheer for Julian.
- 3) “Let us see the size of that fish,” they all said.
- 4) They watched Julian hold his fish high in the air.
- 5) Their attention made Julian feel proud.

Activity G Write the infinitive phrase in each of these sentences on your paper. After each one, write how it is used in the sentence.

Example Their wish was to catch some fish.
to catch—predicate nominative

- 1) It was time to go home.
- 2) They began to pack up their gear.
- 3) The sun was beginning to set.
- 4) Soon, it would be too dark to see anything.
- 5) To be on the road before dark was their goal.

Activity H Write a sentence for each of these infinitives on your paper. Underline the entire infinitive phrase in each sentence.

- 1) to laugh
- 2) to rain
- 3) to be
- 4) to watch

Lesson 1 Review

Part A Write the infinitive phrase in each of these sentences on your paper.

Example The hours seemed to fly by.
to fly by

- 1) Ella and Julian wanted to be home by dark.
- 2) They decided to stop at six o'clock.
- 3) Ella began to count the fish.
- 4) They had hoped to catch many fish.
- 5) To catch enough fish for dinner had been their goal.
- 6) "How many fish are big enough to eat?" asked Julian.
- 7) "We have enough to feed your family and mine," answered Ella.
- 8) "I'll need a big pan to cook this one," Julian said.
- 9) "Let's get ready to go home," Ella said.
- 10) Soon, they were both ready to leave.

Part B Write a sentence for each of these infinitives on your paper. Underline the entire infinitive phrase in each sentence.

- 1) to be
- 2) to work
- 3) to go
- 4) to find
- 5) to see

Gerund

A verb form that has an -ing ending. A gerund is always used as a noun.

A **gerund** is a verb form that ends in *-ing*. A gerund is always used as a noun. In sentences, gerunds act like nouns.

EXAMPLES

- Subject: **Drinking** and **driving** do not mix.
- Direct object: The dog began **barking**.
- Predicate noun: My favorite sport is **swimming**.
- Object of a preposition: The student got in trouble for **coming** in late again.
- Appositives: Ella enjoys two things: **fishing** and in-line **skating**.
- You might try the following kinds of exercise: **biking**, **running**, or **rock hiking**.
- Her special talents—**singing** and **dancing**—helped her get the lead in the musical.

Activity A Write the gerunds in each of these sentences on your paper.

- 1) Riding a bicycle on back roads is great exercise.
- 2) I like running better.
- 3) My favorite activity is playing my trumpet.
- 4) She has trouble getting to school on time.
- 5) Finding his way through the strange city was a challenge.
- 6) They were sent to the office for walking in the halls without a pass.
- 7) His greatest goal was catching a big fish.
- 8) Talking to my parents can be difficult sometimes.
- 9) Dolores thinks fishing is dull.
- 10) She enjoys reading and going to the movies.