

# The Infinitive and the Infinitive Phrase

## Infinitives

**5g.** An **infinitive** is a verb form that can be used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. Most infinitives begin with *to*.

**NOUN** **To paint** is his only ambition. [The infinitive *To paint* is the subject of the verb *is*.]

The puppy only wants **to play**. [The infinitive *to play* is the direct object of the verb *wants*.]

His dream was **to fly**. [The infinitive *to fly* is the predicate nominative of the verb *was*.]

**ADJECTIVE** She's the swimmer **to watch**. [The infinitive *to watch* modifies the noun *swimmer*.]

The one **to ask** is he. [The infinitive *to ask* modifies the pronoun *one*.]

**ADVERB** **To exit**, simply press the escape key. [The infinitive *To exit* modifies the verb *press*.]

It is easy **to find**. [The infinitive *to find* modifies the adjective *easy*.]

**NOTE** *To* can also be used as a preposition.

**EXAMPLE** She went **to** the store **to** shop. [The first *to* is followed by a noun, *store*, so it is being used as a preposition. The second *to* is followed by a verb form, *shop*, so it is being used as part of an infinitive.]

**EXERCISE A** Underline the infinitive in each of the following sentences.

**Examples** 1. The right to vote is very valuable. [*To* is followed by the verb *vote*. *To vote* is the infinitive.]

2. To succeed, you must work very hard. [*To* is followed by the verb *succeed*. *To succeed* is the infinitive.]

1. I tried to call but the line was busy. [Is *to* followed by a verb?]
2. Their only goal is to excel. [Is *to* followed by a verb?]
3. Is this dresser very heavy to lift?
4. Here is the number to call.
5. To finish will be a relief.
6. Did you agree with the decision to go?
7. This case will not be easy to solve.
8. To fly, the wings must create more lift.

9. Michael is learning to type.
10. Jason already went to the cafeteria to eat.

### Infinitive Phrases

**5h.** An **infinitive phrase** consists of an infinitive together with its modifiers and complements. The entire phrase may be used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

**NOUN** She always wants **to be sure**. [The infinitive *to be* is completed by the predicate adjective *sure*. The infinitive phrase is used as the direct object of the verb *wants*.]

**ADJECTIVE** This would be a perfect time **to start a club**. [The infinitive *to start* is completed by the direct object *club*. The infinitive phrase modifies the noun *time*.]

**ADVERB** We gathered in the park **to clean up after the Founders' Day picnic**. [The infinitive *to clean* is modified by the adverb *up* and by the adverb phrase *after the Founders' Day picnic*. The infinitive phrase modifies the verb *gathered*.]

**EXERCISE B** Underline the infinitive phrase in each of the following sentences.

- Examples**
1. To type well requires steady practice. [*To* is followed by the verb *type*. *Type* is modified by the adverb *well*. The infinitive phrase is *To type well*.]
  2. We need a ramp to get wheelchairs into the auditorium. [*To* is followed by the verb *get*. *Get* is completed by the direct object *wheelchairs* and is modified by the adverb phrase *into the auditorium*. The infinitive phrase is *to get wheelchairs into the auditorium*.]
11. To eat nutritious meals and snacks is important to good health. [Is *To* followed by a verb? What words modify or complete that verb?]
  12. You're too smart to fall for that old joke! [Is *to* followed by a verb? What words modify that verb?]
  13. They had planned to practice all weekend.
  14. Right now, your major goal is to do well in school.
  15. Actually, the equation is simple to solve without a calculator.
  16. Try to use more colors and shapes.
  17. We need some community service projects to put in our portfolios.
  18. The solution was to exit the program and reboot.
  19. I'm so sorry to be late for our appointment.
  20. Do you really need to play basketball at six o'clock in the morning, Toby?