

16th December OET Writing – Verb Forms

Starter

Look at the sentences below:

1. I want **to travel to** Paris next year.
2. She enjoys **listening** to music.
3. He can't **swim** in the sea.

What are the missing words?

In English, there are three types of non-finite verb forms:

- The infinitive
- The gerund
- The bare infinitive / base form

These verb forms are used for grammatical reasons and they do not change depending on number, person or tense:

I want **to visit** Paris next year.
I wanted **to visit** Paris last year.

She enjoys **listening** to music.
I enjoy **listening** to music.

Let's look at the reasons why we use these verb forms...

The infinitive – to + verb:

Which verbs could go in these sentences?

He speaks slowly so it's easy to understand him.

= after adjectives we use the infinitive

She started the course to achieve her grades.

= infinitive of purpose – to say why we do something

I arranged to visit my brother at 7pm.

= after some verbs we use the infinitive – especially verbs which talk about future – plan, would like, want, hope, arrange, choose

I made an arrangement to visit my brother at 7pm.

= after some nouns which are formed from verbs which take the infinitive – for example plan, choice, arrangement

Do we have enough money to buy a TV?

= after quantifiers – enough, too much, too many, a lot of, a few, etc.

There's nowhere to go on a Monday night.

= after words like somewhere, nowhere, anywhere, someone, anyone, no one, etc.

I don't know what to buy Sam for her birthday.

= after questions words in the middle of a sentence (but NOT 'why') we use the infinitive

Who was the first person to land on the moon?

= after superlatives or 'the first', 'the second', etc.

The gerund – verb + ing:

Which verbs could go in these sentences?

I'm good at **studying** English.

= after prepositions, we use the gerund

Smoking is bad for your health.

= when we use a verb as the subject of a sentence, we use a gerund

The hardest thing about English is **understanding** grammar.

= when we use a verb as the object in a sentence, we use a gerund

I consider **having** cheese better than **eating** meat.

= after some verbs, we use the gerund

I'm having difficulty **breathing** at the moment.

= after the phrase 'have difficulty', we use gerund

There's no point **asking** them; they won't answer.

= after the phrase 'no point', we use the gerund

The bare infinitive (base form) – ~~to~~ + verb:

Which verbs could go in these sentences?

I can **run** 1000 metres without stopping.

= after modal verbs, we use the bare infinitive

You shouldn't **eat** chocolate if you're trying to lose weight.

= after modal verbs, we use the bare infinitive

Our teacher makes us **do** a lot of homework.

= after the verb 'make', we use the bare infinitive

My mother let me **watch** TV when I got home from school.

= after the verb 'let', we use the bare infinitive

You'd better **go** to the doctor; you're very ill.

= after 'had better', use the bare infinitive

I'd rather not **eat** meat; I'm vegetarian.

= after 'would rather', use the bare infinitive

Practice:

Complete with a gerund or infinitive using the verbs from the list below:

carry, call, come, do, drive, eat out, take, tidy, wait, work

1. I suggest **taking** a taxi to the airport tomorrow. It'll be much quicker.
2. Even though the snow was really deep, we managed **to drive** to the local shop and back.
3. We'd better **do** some shopping – there isn't much food for the weekend.
4. I'm very impatient. I can't stand **waiting** in queues.
5. I wasn't well and a young man offered **to carry** my bags.
6. My parents used to make me **tidy** my room.
7. We threatened **to call** the police if the boys didn't stop throwing stones.
8. Do you feel like **coming** to the gym with me?
9. I'd prefer **to eat out** instead of getting a takeaway.
10. I don't mind **working** late tonight if you want me to.