

INFINITIVE WITH AND WITHOUT TO



FORM

The infinitive of a verb has two forms: the *to*-infinitive and the infinitive without *to*.

The *to*-form consists of *to* plus the base form of the verb:

- *I want **to speak** to you.*
- *We came here **to work**, not **to play**.*

The form without *to* consists of the base form of the verb:

- *She made us **wait** for half an hour.*
- *John lets the dog **sleep** on the sofa.*

TO-INFINITIVE

- We use the *to*-infinitive after a number of common main verbs.
For example:

agree	demand	long	pretend
aim	fail	love	promise
arrange	forget	manage	propose
ask	hate	mean	refuse
begin	help	need	remember
choose	hope	offer	try
claim	intend	plan	want
continue	learn	prefer	wish
decide	like	prepare	

TO-INFINITIVE

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TO-INFINITIVE

- We arranged **to see** the bank manager and applied for a loan.
- Mrs Harding asked us **to call** in on our way home.
- Did you remember **to post** the letter to your mother?
- He just wants everyone **to be** happy.

Tip: Some of these verbs are also often followed by *-ing*.

TO-INFINITIVE

We can use the *to*-infinitive in a clause with a verb that has no subject (a non-finite clause). The *to*-infinitive focuses on the idea of an action or the results of an action, rather than the action in itself:

- **To work** *in a developing country had always been her ambition.*
- **To get** *there before lunch, you would have to take the seven o'clock train.*

INFINITIVE WITHOUT TO

We use the infinitive without *to* after modal verbs *can, could, may, might, will, shall, would, should, must*:

- *She can **sleep** in the guest room tonight.*
- *Will you **need** to rent a car during your stay?*

We also use the infinitive without *to* after *let, make* and (optionally) *help*:

- *He lets us **use** some of his land to grow vegetables.*
- *You can't make a cat **do** anything it doesn't want to do.*
- *I just want to help you **(to) understand** the situation better.*



TYPICAL MISTAKES

We don't use the *to*-infinitive after modal verbs:

- *We might buy a new sofa.*
- Not: ~~We might to buy a new sofa.~~

We don't use the infinitive (with or without *to*) after prepositions:

- *Lemon juice is useful **for cleaning** stained surfaces in the kitchen.*
- Not: ... ~~is useful for clean~~ ... or ... ~~for to clean~~

