

## THE INFINITIVE

253. Read these sentences:

I want *to go*.

They tried *to find* fault with us.

The forms *to go* and *to find* are "infinitives."

The **infinitive** is the base of a verb, often preceded by *to*.

254. Read the following sentences:

1. *To err* is human.

2. Birds love *to sing*.

3. *To respect* our parents is our duty.

4. He refused *to obey* the orders.

5. Many men desire *to make* money quickly.

In sentence 1, the Infinitive, like a noun, is the Subject of the verb *is*.

In sentence 2, the Infinitive, like a noun, is the Object of the verb *love*.

In sentence 3, the Infinitive, like a noun, is the Subject of the verb *is*, but, like a verb, it also takes an object.

In sentence 4, the Infinitive, like a noun, is the Object of the verb *refused*, but, like a verb, it also takes an object.

In sentence 5, the Infinitive, like a noun, is the Object of the verb *desire*, but, like a verb, it also takes an Object and is modified by an Adverb.

It will be seen that the Infinitive is a kind of noun with certain features of the verb, especially that of taking an object (when the verb is Transitive) and adverbial qualifiers. In short, the Infinitive is a Verb-Noun.

255. The word *to* is frequently used with the Infinitive, but is not an essential part or sign of it.

Thus, after certain verbs (*bid, let, make, \*need, \*dare, see, hear*), we use the Infinitive without *to*; as,

*Bid* him go there.

I *bade* him go.

*Let* him sit here.

I will not *let* you go.

*Make* him stand.

I *made* him run.

We *need* not go to-day.

You *need* not do it.

You *dare* not do it.

I saw him do it.

I heard him cry.

\* Except when they are conjugated with *do*.

256. The infinitive without *to* is also used after the verbs *will, would, shall, should, may, might, can, could* and *must*.

I will *pay* the bill.

You *should* work harder.

He *can* speak five languages.

You *must* come to the office at nine tomorrow.

The Infinitive without *to* is also used after *had better, had rather, would rather, sooner than, rather than*; as,

You had better *ask* permission.

I had rather *play* than *work*.

I would rather *die* than *suffer* so.

## USE OF THE INFINITIVE

257. The Infinitive, with or without adjuncts, may be used, like a Noun —

(1) As the Subject of a Verb; as,

*To find* fault is easy.

*To err* is human.

*To reign* is worth ambition.

*an adverb or a phrase that adds meaning to the verb*

(2) As the Object of a transitive Verb; as

I do not mean *to read*.

He likes *to play* cards.

(3) As the Complement of a Verb; as,

Her greatest pleasure is *to sing*.

His custom is *to ride* daily.

(4) As the Object of a Preposition; as,

He had no choice but (= except) *to obey*.

The speaker is about *to begin*.

(5) As an Objective Complement; as,

I saw him *go*.

When the infinitive is thus used, like a Noun, it is called the **Simple Infinitive**

258. The Infinitive is also used—

(1) To qualify a Verb, usually to express *purpose*; as,

He called *to see* my brother (= for the purpose of seeing my brother).

We eat *to live*. (*Purpose*)

I come *to bury* Caesar. (*Purpose*)

He wept *to see* the desolation caused by the flood. (*Cause*)

(2) To qualify an Adjective; as,

Figs are good *to eat*.

This medicine is pleasant *to take*.

The boys are anxious *to learn*.

He is too ill *to do* any work.

(3) To qualify a Noun; as,

This is not the time *to play*.

You will have cause *to repent*.

He is a man *to be admired*.

Here is a house *to let*.

This house is *to let*.

(4) To qualify a Sentence; as,

*To tell* the truth, I quite forgot my promise.

He was petrified, *so to speak*.

When the Infinitive is thus used it is called the **Gerundial or Qualifying Infinitive**.

It will be seen that in 1 and 2 the Gerundial Infinitive does the work of an Adverb; in 3 it does the work of an Adjective; in 4 it is used absolutely.

**259.** The Infinitive may be active or passive. When active it may have a present and a perfect form, and may merely name the act, or it may represent progressive or continued action.

## ACTIVE

<b>Present :</b>	to love.
<b>Perfect :</b>	to have loved.
<b>Present Continuous:</b>	to be loving.
<b>Perfect Continuous:</b>	to have been loving.

When passive the Infinitive has a present and a perfect form.

## PASSIVE

<b>Present :</b>	to be loved.
<b>Perfect :</b>	to have been loved.

## EXERCISE IN GRAMMAR 49

*State how the Infinitive is used in the following sentences:*

- There was nothing for it to fight.
- Let us pray.
- The mango is fit to eat.
- I heard her sing.
- I have come to see you.
- The order to advance was given.
- Men must work and women must weep.
- I am sorry to hear this.
- He is slow to forgive.
- A man severe he was and stern to view.
- And fools who came to scoff remained to pray.
- Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride.
- Full many a flower is born to blush unseen.
- Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast.
- Never seek to tell thy love.
- To retreat was difficult; to advance was impossible.
- Everybody wishes to enjoy life.
- My desire is to see you again.
- There was not a moment to be lost.
- The counsel rose to address the court.
- My right there is none to dispute.
- The ability to laugh is peculiar to mankind.
- He has the power to concentrate his thoughts.
- He was quick to see the point.
- I am not afraid to speak the truth.
- Better dwell in the midst of alarms Than reign in this horrible place.
- Can you hope to count the stars?
- To toil is the lot of mankind.
- It is delightful to hear the sound of the sea.
- It is a penal offence to bribe a public servant.