

Verbs + to-infinitive & -ing form

to-infinitive or -ing form?

Many verbs are followed either by the to-infinitive

e.g. He managed to pay; they taught her to ski...

or by the -ing form

She enjoys reading

I miss hearing her voice

There is a small group of verbs which can be followed by both the to-form and the -ing form. The meaning is can change significantly depending on which form is used.

1. remember, forget

With the to-infinitive you can talk about actions someone is/was supposed to do.

I remembered to buy her a birthday card.

But I forgot to post it.

With the -ing form you refer to definite events — things that people actually did.

I remember meeting her in a bar. = I met her and now I remember that meeting.

2. Stop

With the -ing form you are saying that an activity has happened.

She stopped talking to him after that last argument.

With to-infinitive you are giving the reason for stopping.

She stopped to tell me about her boyfriend when I saw her in town.

3. Try

With the to-infinitive you try something but can't do it.

I tried to make her understand my feelings, but she wouldn't listen. = I didn't manage to make her understand.

With the -ing form you try something to see what the outcome will be.

I tried leaving her messages, but she never replied. = I managed to leave messages, but they didn't work.

4. like love hate

With the to-infinitive, you can imply that you think something is a good (or bad) idea to do.

I like to do my tax returns early.

With the -ing form you state your real feelings about something.

I hate doing me my tax returns.