

46 Verb *-ing* forms; verb + *-ing* form or infinitive?

Flying to another continent usually means spending hours trapped in a plane, bored stiff. But this is their first long-haul flight and they mean to enjoy it.



1 Verb *-ing* forms

Sometimes *-ing* forms can have their own subjects and objects:

- subject + *-ing* form: *I'm looking forward to my wife returning.*
- *-ing* form + object: *Meeting new people is one benefit of taking evening classes.*

We can use determiners, possessives, possessive adjectives or object pronouns before *-ing* forms:

All this complaining won't get you anywhere, you know. (determiner)

Peter's complaining didn't do him any good. (possessive)

Exorbitant tax rates led to him leaving the country. (object pronoun)

FORMALITY CHECK In formal English we prefer to use possessive adjectives rather than object pronouns before *-ing* forms: *Exorbitant tax rates led to his leaving the country.*



When we use the + *-ing* form and we want to link it with an object, we use *of*:

✗ *The giving presents is a traditional part of the naming ceremony.*

✓ *The giving of presents is a traditional part of the naming ceremony.*

Many adjectives and nouns are followed by a preposition + *-ing* form (► Unit 65):

Lara isn't capable of lying and she has no reason for not telling the truth.

2 Verb + *-ing* form

The verbs below can be followed by an *-ing* form, but NOT by an infinitive:

admit appreciate avoid* burst out can't help* consider contemplate defer delay deny detest* dislike* endure* enjoy* escape excuse* face* fancy* feel like finish give up imagine* involve* justify* keep (on) leave off mention* mind* miss* postpone practise prevent* put off put sb off recall* recommend resent* resist* risk* save suggest tolerate* understand**

* With these verbs we can also put an object before the *-ing* form. Compare:

Can you *imagine wearing that dress!* (verb + *-ing* form)

Can you *imagine Jimma wearing that dress!* (verb + object + *-ing* form)

✗ *I avoid to travel in the rush hour.* ✓ *I avoid travelling in the rush hour.*

Certain verbs (particularly sense verbs) are only followed by an *-ing* form when they have an object:

catch discover feel find hear leave notice observe see spot watch

✗ *In 'Hamlet' the prince discovers hiding behind the curtains.*

✓ *In 'Hamlet' the prince discovers Polonius hiding behind the curtains.*

3 Verb + *-ing* form/infinitive

Some verbs can be followed by an *-ing* form or an infinitive, with no difference in meaning:

attempt begin bother can't bear can't stand cease continue deserve fear hate intend like (= enjoy) love prefer start

I can't stand to see/seeing animals in pain.



We usually avoid putting two infinitives or two *-ing* forms together:

[*He intended starting taking lessons.*] ✓ *He intended to start taking lessons.*