

Gerunds, Present Participles, and Infinitives

An **infinitive** is the basic form of a verb. It is commonly used after the word *to*.

Example: He likes to run. She needs to study.

A **gerund** is a verb ending in *-ing* that acts like a noun. Because they act like a noun, gerunds may be used as the subject of a sentence:

Example: Running regularly will make you feel better. Studying requires most of my time during the day.

There are some *verbs* that must be followed by a **gerund**.

Example: I enjoy writing. Would you *mind* reading my essay?

If a **gerund** is combined with a **preposition**, it is called a **gerund phrase**:

Example: He spends all his time studying to be a doctor.

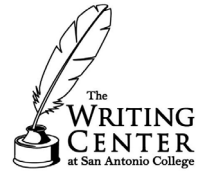
A **present participle** is a verb ending in *-ing* that still acts like a verb when used in the present or past progressive tense:

Example: The girl is speaking to her friends.

We were listening to music.

(See reverse side for examples of when to use gerunds vs infinitives.)

An infinitive or a gerund can be used to express a similar idea. Infinitives are used to describe



actions that may take place in the future or that are possible. Gerunds are used to describe actions that are factual. For example:

Infinitive: I would like **to go** to the mall.

Gerund phrase: I like **going to** the mall.

In this example, the infinitive is used to express a desire to do something that hasn't happened yet. The gerund phrase is factual.

Here are a few more examples:

Infinitive: Do you like **to dance**?

Gerund: Did you like **dancing** last night?

Infinitive: Did you start **to write** your paper?

Gerund: I started **writing** my paper, and now I'm almost done.

Infinitive: I need **to sleep** more at night.

Gerund: **Sleeping** six to eight hours every night is good for you.

Verbs of perception (feel, hear, notice, observe, see, smell, watch) are often followed by gerunds, but never infinitives. For example:

--I think I *hear* someone **playing** a piano.

--Do you *smell* something **burning**?