

To forms (particle /preposition)

Gerunds with to

Many non-native English speakers are reluctant to use **-ing** after **"TO"**. Maybe it is because you've learnt, at school that after **"TO"** a verb should always be in the infinitive

I) This is only half true. **"TO"** actually has **TWO DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS**:

- EITHER an infinitive marker (i.e. to show that the next word is an infinitive verb):

- *The kid doesn't want to tidy up his room.*

- OR a preposition (- *He has gone to lunch*).

When **"TO"** acts as a preposition, it is usually followed by an **-ing** form (which in this case is a gerund) or a noun/ noun phrase, like in these examples:

- *I like cats – I like tennis – I like swimming (Here, "swimming" is a gerund)*

- *to run: I'm running – He isn't swimming, just diving. Here, "running" and "swimming", "diving" are two verbs .*

II) When is it correct to use **"TO" plus - ing?**

In English, the form **V + -ing** is called a *gerund* if it serves as a noun. For example, the gerund form of "run" is "running". (*I like cats, I like dogs, I like running*). However, not all **V + ing** forms are gerunds:

- In *"I am running because I'm late."*, *"running"* is a verb where you use *to + V + -ing*

1) If the **TO** is part of a phrasal verb or a verb + preposition combination:

A *phrasal verb* is something like "look forward to", "confess to", etc. In this case, the **"TO"** is part of the verb itself and is followed by -ing.

- *I'm looking forward to meeting my friend again.*

2) If the **TO** is part of an adjective + preposition combination: *to be used/ accustomed to- to be opposed to- to be addicted to- to be devoted to- to be given to- to be used to-*

It is not just the preposition **TO** that imposes the gerund, but the construction **to be+ adjective+TO +V+ing** .

- *A lot of little girls aren't accustomed to going to school in this country.*

- *Most citizens are opposed to paying increased taxes.*

These look similar to the examples above, but you can tell that a word like "*opposed*" and "*accustomed*" are adjectives in these cases, because there is a form of the verb *to be* before them and can be replaced by other adjectives (here : "*afraid*" and "*angry*").

3) If the **TO** is part of a noun + preposition combination:

- *His addiction to drinking was the cause of a very serious accident.*

- *Paula's dedication to volunteering is a surprise at her age.*

Finally, if you have the slightest doubt, try to think quickly and to replace the **"verb + ing" construction by an equivalent noun**. If the sentence makes sense, the gerund is the right solution; if not, you need an infinitive form... Easy, isn't it? 😊😊