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## A Semantic Analysis of Infinitive and Gerund

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<b>Keywords:</b>  -infinitive - clause - gerund - position - subject	<b>Abstract</b>  Infinitive and gerund have a semantic duty as nouns. In other words, they have the function of nouns though their forms are basically taken from verbs. Infinitive and gerund forms can be used following adjectives and other verbs. Gerunds, however, can exist after prepositions and other expressions. A gerund is derived from verbs by adding (-ing) at the end. It is worth mentioning that there are words that end with the (-ing) inflection, but they are not gerunds. The infinitive form (simple form of the verb) is either preceded by (to) or it is bare (to-less-infinitive) which is known in the grammar as zero infinitive.
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## التحليل الدلالي للمصدر المؤول والمصدر الصريح

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الخلاصة:	الكلمات الدالة: -
<b>المصدر الصريح</b>	-المصدر -العبرة -المصدر الصريح -المحل -الفاعل
إن لهذين المصدرين : المصدر المؤول والمصدر الصريح واجب دلالي على أنهما أسماء، أي انهما بعبارة أخرى يقومان بأداء وظيفة الأسم، بالرغم من كونهما مشتقين من أفعال رئيسة. يمكن أن يستعمل هاتان المصدران بعد الصفات أو حتى بعد أفعال أخرى. لا بد من التنويه ان المصدر الصريح يمكن له ان يتواجد بعد حروف الجر او حتى بعد عبارات أخرى.	<b>معلومات البحث</b> <b>تاريخ البحث:</b> الاستلام: 2020-9-22 القبول: 2020-10-19
يبني المصدر الصريح من الأفعال بإضافة (-ing) في نهايتها. وينبغي التأكيد كذلك ان هنالك كلمات قد تنتهي بهذه اللاحقة إلا انها لا تعد مصادر صريحة في حين يصاغ المصدر المؤول من الصيغة البسيطة للفعل مسبقا بالحرف (to) وقد نجد مصدرا مؤولا خاليا من هذه اللفظة عندئذ يعرف في النحو الإنكليزي بالمصدر المؤول الصفري.	التوفر على النت

### 1. Introduction

Some grammarians of English claim that the infinitive and gerund carry the idea of action only. In line with this, they assure that these forms refer to action unrelated to the concept of time, but the researchers in this study advocate the fact that the infinitive carries the idea of future time, whereas the gerund expresses all-time action. And, moreover, time sometimes is indicated by the other parts of the sentence. Anyhow, there is no sentence without time.

The infinitive and the gerund have both structure and semantic realizations. Structurally, they are subject to strict places in sentences, whereas semantically, they express meanings and time of doing actions.

Here are some of the main headings discussed in the body of the research concerning infinitive: definitions of the term “infinitive”, structure of the term, subjects of infinitive, coordinated infinitives and positions of infinitive. And then we turn to the headings that belong to the gerund: definitions of gerund, clause types of gerund, subjects of gerund, gerund and passive, features of gerund and positions of it.

The introduction implies the following subtitles: the problem, aims of the research, procedures, limitation and value of the study.

## **1.1 The problem**

Infinitives and gerunds are explained in the books of English grammar as main subjects because these constructions cannot be escaped in daily communication. Infinitive raises crushing difficulties to the learners of English, especially, the beginners since most of them cannot select the right place and they don't know the proper rules of using this form. Infinitive is either marked by (to) before it, in this case it is called **full infinitive**, e.g. **To fish is a hard job**. Or the infinitive is zero when the particle (to) is not existent. The ordinary verb and the infinitive make two actions inside the sentence. Learners of English may not have the ability to discover the common rules behind the uses of these forms. Gerund is made up of adding the suffix (-ing) to the simple form of the verb, the base form, as in: **I hate his teaching**. The learners may also misuse the positions of these items. They may fail to mark the coordination of the infinitives, or they may ignore to identify the subjects of the gerunds. Another problem will appear when the learners confuse the gerund with a continuous verb since it looks like it in form. Several problems facing the learners will be disclosed during the coming steps of the research.

## **1.2 Aims to be attained**

The current research is really intended to aim at fulfilling the following:

1. Many definitions of infinitive and gerund are offered so that the readers of English, and especially the learners can have complete clarity on these forms.
2. Clarifying all about these subjects by giving numerous explanations and analyses on them and offering proper comments as well. The researchers' aim is to present adequate information on these grammatical themes.
3. This study also aims at improving the learners' ability to speak and communicate in the English language through exposing the material of these forms.

## **1.2 The procedures**

The procedures to be adopted in this research are, as follows:

- 1 Making a total informative survey of the infinitive and the gerund forms in the literature of English grammar.
- 2 The material of the research is put under discussion, analysis and important explanations and comments are always given.

- 3 Conclusions and judgments finally reached are inserted in the last part of the research.

### **1.3 Limitation of the study**

The current study is limited to the infinitive and the gerund in different clauses and different semantic relations. Different type of sentences including these forms are dealt with adequately. Within the limits of the very subject, everything is included in this study. So the researchers can assure that nothing about it is left without being tackled.

The present research is specifically of theoretical nature via which practical advantages to improve speech and writing can be obtained.

### **1.4 Value of the study**

This research is expected to be of immense value to the teachers and learners specialized in English who get advantages of the subject—matter of these forms.

This study is purely theoretical in nature, but it can be useful in practical spheres while speaking and communicating with others in the language. Speech can be enhanced if this material is understood and controlled at reasonable level. Writing can also be developed when the main points of the research are fully mastered.

## **2. The infinitive form**

### **2.1 The term "infinitive" defined**

The term “infinitive” points to the base form of the verb that follows the particle (to) and sometimes without it, for example: to read

(Praninskas, 1975:277)

Other definitions, anyhow, are suggested, such as: infinitive is the most basic form or, in other words, the simple form of the verb without any ending preceded by the particle (to) which is deleted sometimes. It is worth mentioning the use of the infinitive at the beginning of the sentence is rare in English.

### **2.2 Structure of infinitive**

When talking about structure of infinitive, some things mentioned in the definition should be repeated. Two forms of infinitive can be encountered in the language, and they are distinguished according to whether the infinitive follows the particle (to) or not. That one with (to) is grammatically called **marked** or **full infinitive**. The infinitive without (to) is given the name **zero** or **base infinitive**.

### **2.3 Infinitive clauses**

The infinitive has all the following appearances of clauses:

1. **SV** =  
I (S) anticipated [them (S) + to return (V)].
2. **SVO** =

The officer orders him (S) to leave (V) it (O).

3. **SVC** =

Layla thought the man (S) to be (V) true (C).

4. **SVVO** =

I told her (S) to come (V) to tell (V) them (O).

5. **SVOO** =

It is better for me (S) to make (V) him (O) an invitation (O).

6. **SVOC** =

They (S) disagree to appoint (V) Ali (O) a monitor (C).

7. **SVOA** =

The teacher told her (S) to make (V) questions (O) in the class (A).

S stands for (subject), V for (verb), O for (object), C for (complement) and A stands for (adverbial).

## 2.4 Subjects of infinitive

The subject of infinitive is either explicitly mentioned or implied (understood from the context of a sentence). Two cases are found in the grammar viz. common case and objective case. The former is exemplified in: **Ali wishes Layla to help him**. A pronoun in the objective case is illustrated by: **Ali wishes her to help him**. These examples represent the case of explicit subjects. In the case of the implied subject of the infinitive, it is comprehended as being generic or in another word indefinite, as in: **To eat too much is harmful for health**. Or having the same reference to the subject of the main verb, as in: **John likes to write a letter**. It can refer to the object of the main verb, e.g. **He told her to sit on that chair**.

Explicitly expressed subjects of infinitives can be preceded by the particle (for) which is grammatically a possible case in English, notice the following example:

1. It would be a splendid idea for them to have a new house.

## 2.5 Co-ordinated infinitives

Leaners of English should carefully notice that all the particles of coordinated infinitives could optionally be deleted except the first one which has to be bligatorily present, like

2. I have requested her to leave soon or (to) stay quiet.

A question word can be used in the sentence post modified by the infinitive with (to), for example:

3. I don't know whom to communicate with.
4. I forget what to say.

The English infinitive may cause ambiguity in understanding a single sentence where two or more possible meanings can be concluded from a sole sentence, for example:

5. It is very windy to fly.

Two meanings are understood from the sentence above either:

6. The weather is very windy (for us) to fly (to travel by air).

Or

7. It is very windy (for us) to fly a plane.

to fly has two semantic readings and for this reason the previous infinitive is ambiguous.

(Murphy, 1985:67)

## 2.6 Infinitive positions

The English infinitive acts as nominal, adjectival and adverbial.

### 1. As nominal

In the case of nominal, the infinitive has the functions below:

#### A. A subject of sentence

The infinitive in this case is used with emotive verbs, e.g.

8. To see the girlfriend excites him.

#### B. Subject complement

Sometimes the infinitive may be used to act as a complement of the subject, e.g.

9. His decision is to set free the man

Constructions expressing shades of meaning by using the predicative infinitive are shown below:

a. The very closely coming future with unrealized intention, in this case Be about is used before the infinitive; this is clearly illustrated the following example.

10. The plane is about to reach.

b. The infinitive following the verb to be expresses:

(i) Direct command, e.g.

11. You are to stand still for (5) minutes.

(ii) Indirect command, as follow:

12. He said that she wasn't to go home.

(iii) Expressing the notion of planning, as in;

13. He is to travel tomorrow.

(iv) Expressing the idea of Prohibition, as in;

14. You are not to block the street by stones.

(v) Shared agreement, like

15. They are to get married in the near future.

(vi) Expressing the notion of destiny, like

16. She was to find her son no more.

#### c. Direct object

The English infinitives do the function of direct object, like

17. He desires to learn English.

Verbs with the infinitive used as a direct object fall into categories:

- 1- The first category involves mono-transitive verbs. In other words, the verbs that have the infinitive as the only object, like  
18. He likes to study English.
- 2- The other category implies ditransitive verbs. Verbs which have the infinitive representing only one of the two objects, as in:  
19. I requested him to study English.

The first category actually falls into three groups:

- a. Verbs preceding infinitive that is always referring to the same subject of the ordinary verb, e.g.  
20. She stopped to cry when her father took her to the amusing park.
- b. Verbs with a following infinitive whose subject can either refer to the subject of the main verb, or grammatically it refers to someone else, e.g.  
21. He likes to see his girlfriend.  
22. He likes Ali to see his girlfriend.
- c. Verbs preceding infinitive introduced by question words.  
23. She learned how to ride a horse in two hour training.  
24. They don't know what to discuss.

The second category (ditransitive verbs) has two groups:

- a. Verbs followed by infinitive with subject always referring to the object of the ordinary verb:  
25. They convinced Jack to donate to the poor.
- b. Verbs preceding infinitive introduced by questions words, e.g.  
26. Please, tell the travelers where to exchange money.
- d. Retained object

The infinitive can be used to function as retained object of passive verbs, e.g.

27. The students were ordered to write down the verses.

- e. Appositive

The infinitive can be encountered in English to function as an appositive, i.e., modifying nouns, e.g.

28. Her plan, to elect a new manger, came to failure.

- f. Adjective complement

The infinitive can exist as a complement of adjective, like

29. Ali is easy to sleep.

(Radford, 1988:600)

## **2. As adjectival**

The infinitive can be encountered as an adjectival modifying nouns and pronouns, e.g.

30. The American decision to fight was unjustified.

31. She is a bad girl to advise.

32. Ali has nowhere to escape.

33. Ali hasn't a way to escape.

(Leech, 1994:307-308)

### 3. As adverbial

The infinitive can modify verbs, adjectives, adverbs and the complete sentence.

a. Verbs, as follows:

34. We eat to keep good health.

b. Adjectives, as follows:

35. She feels happy to be with the children.

c. Adverbs, as follows:

36. He talked in a convincing way as to make the teacher listen to him.

d. The whole sentences as follows:

37. I don't believe what he says, to inform you the fact.

### 2.7 The semantic roles of the infinitive

Various semantic relations are indicated by the infinitive which exist subordinately. The infinitive has semantic effect in giving the sentence complementary meaning without which the sentence is semantically incomplete. The sentence could lose the actual meaning if the infinitive is deleted and perhaps the whole meaning of the sentence is damaged. The infinitive is an important part in relating different parts of the sentence. The roles of the infinitive exist both in English and Arabic. The following roles of the infinitive are expressed in English:

a. Purpose

38. I came to offer condolences, not to fight.

b. Result

39. She went out to find out the people under lockdown.

c. Time

40. I lived to attend the Iranian-Iraqi war.

d. Reason

41. She is impolite to do such disturbances.

e. Condition

42. She should be happy to leave.

f. Exception

43. Nothing would convince the bride but for me to meet her requirements.

g. Comparison

44. The coach requested timeout as though to make his mind again.

h. Degree

45. Nothing is more important than to spend time on reading.

i. Preference

46. They will fight to the end, better than give in.

[<http://www.dictionary.com>]

### 2.8 Split infinitive



The infinitive can be separated to allow a place of inserting an adverb, e.g.

47. The demonstrators are not as qualified enough to strongly affect the government programmes.

[<http://www.dictionary.com>]

## 2.8 Dangling infinitive

Dangling infinitive is infinitive which can be faced in English only, e.g.

48. to buy books from a bookstore, it is obligatory to pay the required money.

[<http://www.englishtown.com>]

## 3 The Gerund

### 3.1 Definitions of gerund

Among many definitions given by writers of grammar, a gerund is a word which looks like a verb, but it's actually a noun. Or it is a word which is formed by adding (-ing) to the base form. In another word, a gerund is a verb form with which (-ing) is attached at the end. A gerund in another definition is word which changes the part of speech into a noun. It is, indeed, another way of expressing a verb changing it into a noun. (Allen, 1959:170)

The researchers assure that the gerund is the way of turning a verb into a noun by adding (-ing) to it. In this process, a verb is put under a small change of adding (-ing) at the end of it.

### 3.2 Clause types of the gerunds

The clause types in which the gerund operates are posed below:

- 1 **SV**, e.g.  
I admire her (S) thinking (V).
- 2 **SVO**, e.g.  
I assure his (S) speaking (V) some words (O).
- 3 **SVC**, e.g.  
I like her (S) being (V) polite (C).
- 4 **SVA**, e.g.  
I hate his (S) staying (V) at home (A).
- 5 **SVOO**, e.g.  
The staff rejected her (S) electing (V) him (O) a model (O).
- 6 **SVOC**, e.g.  
Their (S) choosing (V) him (O) monitor (C) displeased them.
- 7 **SVOA**, e.g.  
Your having (S) the material in your notebooks took (V) more time (O) than expected (A).

### 3.3 Subjects of the gerund

The subjects of the gerund are either overtly expressed or implied. In the case of expressed subjects, they can be either a genitive substantive, possessive pronouns in

formal style, a substantive in a common cases, or a personal pronoun in the adjective cases, like

49. I dislike him speaking these words. Whereas the subject of gerund, in the case of implied, is either known to be indefinite, like

50. Eating too much is harmful.

Or it is referring to the same person of the subject; sometimes, however, it refers to the object of the main verb. Notice the instances below:

51. He likes studying chemistry.

52. He impeded me of working hard.

The subject of gerund could be a preposition and phrase (of-phrase) indicating a human being or a non-human thing, like

53. The shopping of the women annoyed her husband.

What about can be followed by the gerund in wh-questions that are formed irregularly, e.g.

54. What about repeating the question once more.

### **3.4 Gerund and passive**

The gerund can make formal differences as far as voice and aspect concerned by having different forms that are similar to these differences. These differences are well illustrated below:

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| 55. She is fond of writing poetry.  | (simple)               |
| 56. Ali refused having change his mind.                                       | (perfective)           |
| 57. He can possibly have an opportunity on ground of being working part-time. | (progressive)          |
| 58. He is afraid of being shown on TV.  | (passive progressive)  |
| 59. He is afraid of having shown on TV.                                       | (passive perfective)   |
| 60. He is ready for getting the meat cooked.                                  | (mandative)            |
| 61. The meat having got cooked, he sent it to the workers to be eaten.        | (perfective mandative) |

### **3.5 Features of gerund**

The gerund resembles verbs in a number of characteristics. In line with this, it can be used as transitive and intransitive and active and passive. Besides, it can be modified by adverbials and can be negated as well, as shown below:

62. Ali began studying history. (transitive)
63. She likes boxing. (intransitive)
64. They are all happy of finishing their works swiftly. (active)
65. They are all happy of the work being finished swiftly. (passive)
66. She enjoys her sitting idly in the office. (modified by an adverbial)
67. She blamed her kid for not cooperating with his teacher. (negated)

(Swan, 2002:7)

### 3.6 The gerund positions

Murphy (1985:144) indicates that, similar to the infinitive, the gerund can be used as nominal, adjectival and adverbial.

#### A. As nominal

The following functions are indicated by gerund as nominal:

- 1- Subject of sentence, like  
68. The crying of the babies annoyed them to sleep.
- 2- Direct object, like  
69. The boss favourites meeting girls to meeting guys.
- 3- Object of a preposition, like  
70. He is preferring of leaving home country.
- 4- Indirect object, like  
71. I give researching priority over teaching in the college.
- 5- Objective complement, e.g.  
72. They call this game jumping.

(Swan, 2002:3)

- 6- Appositive, e.g.  
73. Her allegation, my controlling over her property by fake, is merely a lie.
- 7- Adjective complement, e.g.  
74. The girls are busy putting make-up.

#### B. As adjectival

The English gerund can be permodifiers or postmodifiers as adjectival, e.g.

Drinking water, waiting room, smiling child, shopping centers.

75. The time for making excuses is late.

[<http://www.dictionary.com>]

#### C. As adverbial

As adverbial, the gerund sometimes occurs modifying verbs, adjectives and the whole sentence too.

1. Verbs, e.g.  
76. She spent the nighttime reading poetry.
2. Adjectives, e.g.  
77. She is always afraid of seeing lizards.
3. The whole sentence, e.g.  
78. Opening the window, Ali saw the plants are getting green.

The gerund is used to perform different semantic adverbial relations, collocated with or even without prepositions, as indicated below:

- a. Purpose  
79. We put a hedge hoping or not to allow the sheep from being stray.
- b. Reason  
80. He was rewarded for succeeding in the final exams.

- c. Time  
81. They noticed me entering the police station.
- d. Result  
82. The students never took the exam without complaining.
- e. Condition  
83. If walking is tiring, rent a taxi.
- f. Degree  
84. Nothing could be to blame as receiving a bribe.
- g. Manner  
85. He spent the night touring through the main city areas.
- h. Exception  
86. I have nothing to do except watching TV.
- i. Means  
87. By applying this plan, we will succeed definitely.

### 3.7 Half gerund

Sometimes interference can take place when a double interpreted construction is concluded: it is either considered a gerund or a present participle. This case results in the grammatical process called “half gerund”. Notice the example below:

88. I like her teaching.

**Teaching** in the above example can have two possible readings: it is either gerund when the pronoun her is to be taken as a possessive pronoun; the sentence in this case is interpreted as **I like the act of her teaching**. It is a present participle when the pronoun her is treated as an accusative pronoun. In this case, it is used to function as an object of the main verb. The sentence is paraphrased to mean: **I like her when she is teaching**.

[<http://www.englishtown.com>]

### 3.8 Dangling gerund

Dangling gerund usually exists in English, but not in Arabic, as in:

89. Since completing my study, I have started a job in a company.

[<http://www.englishlifem.com>]

### 3.9 Gerund similar to nouns

There are some nouns in English that look like gerund in form, ending with (-ing) but they are not gerunds. There are two types:

- 1- Proper names expressing origin, e.g.  
belongings, borrowings, readings.
- 2- Common nouns, e.g.  
buildings, drawings, paintings.

[<http://www.dictionary.com>]

## 4. Conclusion

So far the discussion and analysis of the research have come to an end and while researching and analyzing, the work has encountered many difficulties and obstacles, but the researchers have exerted very unusual efforts to overcome them. The learners of English and the readers in general of different advanced levels can find it useful and it deserves the effort of reading. This research has been written in an understandable and simplified language in order to meet the learners' and teachers' need in this sphere of grammar. Many points are concluded from the research. Concluded points are divided into two parts: those general points on the topic and then special points regarding the subject are cited.

### **General points on the subject**

1. Throughout the researchers' massive outside readings on the subject, it can be concluded that infinitive and gerund are among the most—visited subjects in English. These two themes are viewed tremendously over many past years by writers of grammar and researchers.
2. These subjects are of great importance for the speakers of English. Non-existence of them will lead to lack in expressing adequate speech. These are surely complementary to the language and they can not be escaped in speech and writing.
3. These two forms are derived from verbs., i.e., they are other forms of verbs; they, however, are treated in English as nouns although they originally taken from verbs. This is a problem to the learners who may treat them as verbs.
4. Infinitive and gerund differ from verbs since they don't take the third person singular (-s) nor do they end in (-ed) because they are nouns.
5. The infinitive is either bare form (to-less-infinitive) or preceded by the particle (to), in this case it is called a full infinitive. Hence, the gerund is made up of the simple form of the verb with (-ing) attached at the end of it.
6. The infinitive rarely appears at the beginning of a sentence. It is usually used inside the sentence. Gerund can freely be used in any place in the sentence. Gerunds are more flexible in this respect.
7. Sometimes ambiguities occur when using infinitive and gerund in some sentences. Ambiguity means a sentence which has two or more semantic realizations and this case leads to misunderstanding on part of the listener. And matters, perhaps, become risky. Clarification in this respect are required to overcome the ambiguity.
8. Since these forms are derived from verbs, the learners of English may overlap them with the main verbs and how they are used. The teacher's duty here is important to show the differences between the two different linguistic matters.
9. Although infinitive and gerund have been widely dealt with by a great deal of writers of grammar and researchers, the present work can be considered a modest contribution added to the literature of English grammar forwarded in a simplified way with comprehensively-covered material.
10. The infinitive and the gerund are treated in this research as time-carriers besides the idea of action. This idea is rejected by many grammarians who highlight the idea of action only and overlook the time concept. The idea of time is clearly noticed when translating the following sentence into Arabic.

90. That girl could express herself very well in the interview to get the job.

أ. استطاعت تلك الفتاة ان تعبر عن نفسها جيداً في المقابلة كي تحصل على العمل.

ب. استطاعت تلك الفتاة التعبير عن نفسها جيداً في المقابلة للحصول على العمل.

ان تعبر in the first translation expresses the idea of futurity or an unrealized action yet, whereas التعبير in the second rendering is used to express all-time action. The same can be said about كي تحصل in the first sentence and للحصول in the second.

11. The writers of this research are unsure whether these frames are universal or not. Languages other than English and Arabic may or may not include similar forms. To decide the universality of a certain theme in any language is requiring deep insight and knowledge at least in several world languages.
12. The learners of English, especially, the beginners may ignore the semantics of these forms and consequently they will face difficulties in recognizing the meaning of them and even how to use them correctly in sentences. The gerund may possibly create a further difficulty when overlapping it with the continuous verbs since it looks like them in form.

#### Special points in respect of gerunds and infinitives

1. Both gerunds and infinitives can have the function of a **subject** in the sentence although infinitives hardly accept this place but it is not impossible, like
  91. a. playing chess requires much time of training.
  - b. To play chess for this lady is interesting.
2. These forms are used to identify a noun when they have the role of **noun complement** and **appositive**, as in:
  92. a. Her hobby to use English became a habit.
  - b. I don't understand her hobby to use English.
  - c. Her insisting desire in life, using English, seemed to be serious.
3. Both infinitives and gerunds can often play the role as a **subject complement**, like
  93. a. John's favourite concern is writing articles in newspapers.
  - b. John's favourite concern is to write short stories.
4. In regard of infinitives, they are used after certain adjectives. In this case, they play the role of **adjective complement**, as in:
  94. a. He was uncertain to inform the director about it.
  - b. He was unwilling to inform his father, too.
5. Not many infinitives take the role of **object of a preposition**, but gerunds are not uncommon to play this role, e.g.
  95. She told her parents about leaving home forever.

Except and but are the prepositions which appear with an infinitive, like

  96. a. The government made no decision except to close the borders.
  - b. What's remained for her but to take her books and leave?

6. Gerunds and infinitives can be used to have the place of a **direct object**, but it is reasonable to be stated that some verbs take gerunds, whereas others take infinitives, it is actually a complicated matter for the learners of English, why native speakers say:

**Why do you decide to run?**, not **decide running**. In other cases, the very speakers of English may say: **We may avoid running**, not to **avoid to run**. Anyhow, there are some verbs which admit any choice of the two verb forms.

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