USING –ING WORDS AND INFINITIVES

Sometimes we use words ending with \textit{ing} as nouns, e.g. \textit{Parking is difficult at UWA}. At other times they are part of a verb, e.g. \textit{I am sitting at my desk}. This Survival Guide focuses on the use of –ing words as nouns.

You may ask: “What is an \textit{infinitive}”? In English it takes the form \textit{to + a verb}, e.g. \textit{to be}, \textit{to study}, \textit{to do}.

Sometimes it’s difficult to work out whether to use an –ing ending or an infinitive after a verb. This Guide provides information and examples to help you decide.

\textbf{Verbs + -ing}

Some verbs can be followed by an –ing word but not by an infinitive. Below are some which are often found in academic writing, but there are many others.\footnote{\textbf{Grammar and Editing 8}}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Verbs} & \textbf{-ing} \\
\hline
admit & avoid \\
consider & involve \\
justify & mention \\
pRACTISE & prevent \\
recommend & suggest \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textbf{Some examples}

\textit{We \textbf{justified stopping} the experiment on ethical grounds.}

\textit{My supervisor \textbf{recommended reading} more journal articles.}

\textit{I \textbf{avoided plagiarising} by referencing correctly.}

\textit{We \textbf{suggest continuing} the experiment using different plants.}

\textit{I \textbf{practised using} the new equipment for over an hour.}

\textbf{Verbs + infinitive}

Some verbs can be followed by an infinitive but not by an –ing form. Below are some which are often found in academic writing, but there are many others.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Verbs} & \textbf{infinitive} \\
\hline
agree & aim \\
attempt & decide \\
manage & offer \\
propose & prove \\
seem & tend \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textbf{Some examples}

\textit{We \textbf{agreed to repeat} the experiment at a different time of day.}

\textit{I \textbf{aim to show} that human habitation has led to the loss of that particular species.}

\textit{The philanthropist \textbf{offered to pay} her university fees for three years.}

\textit{Our initial experiments \textbf{seem to indicate} our hypothesis was wrong.}

\textit{I \textbf{tend to like} writing better than reading.}
### Did you know?
Some verbs can be followed by an **infinitive or –ing** but they have **different meanings**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>+-ing</th>
<th>infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>forget/remember</td>
<td>= forget/remember an earlier action: <em>I remember locking the lab door.</em></td>
<td>=forget/remember to do a future action: <em>Don’t forget to lock the lab door.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go on</td>
<td>= continue: <em>I went on answering questions even though I was hungry.</em></td>
<td>= to change to another action: <em>After giving my presentation, I went on to answer questions.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>= will result in: <em>This new job means moving to Sydney.</em></td>
<td>= intend to do something: <em>I mean to finish my thesis by July this year.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regret</td>
<td>= feel sorry about the past: <em>I regret not studying harder in first year.</em></td>
<td>= announce bad news: <em>I regret to inform you that you have failed.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stop</td>
<td>= finish an action: <em>The company stopped making cars last year.</em></td>
<td>= finish an action to do another: <em>We stopped to watch the protesters.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>try</td>
<td>= do something to see what will happen: <em>Try using a different type of cereal for your experiment.</em></td>
<td>= make an effort to do something difficult: <em>We tried to alter the meeting time but we couldn’t.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Did you know?
Some verbs can be followed by an **infinitive or –ing** and there is **NO difference is meaning**, e.g. attempt, begin, cease, continue, hate, intend, love, prefer, start:

*I’m going to continue to do/doing this essay even though it’s difficult.*

*We intend to go/going to a conference overseas this year.*

*I prefer to do/doing my experiments in the morning.*

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