

The Use of the Infinitive

Wenyuan Gu

West Career&Technical Academy

Las Vegas, Nevada

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The English verb has two major forms, *finite* and *non-finite*. How to use them correctly is very important to English language learners (ELL), whose native language is not English when they study English. Having taught English as a second language for many years, the writer tried to summarize and illustrate the various use of *the infinitive*, one of the three non-finite forms - *the infinitive*, *the participles* (which have two forms, *the present participle* and *the past participle*), and *the gerund*, on the basis of his extensive reading and review of different English grammar books, reference books, magazines, newspapers, books, and English dictionaries, etc., in order for English language learners to further understand how to use *the infinitive* properly in the English language. *The infinite* is the verb form that simply names the action of the verb, without any other specification, etc., (in English used with or without *to*). *The infinitive* also has two kinds of infinitive – *infinitive with to* (to-infinitive) and *infinitive without to* (bare infinitive). “*She always comes to help me,*” in which *to help* is an infinitive with *to*. “*I saw her leave the house,*” in which *leave the house* is an infinitive without *to* or bare infinitive. We do not say “*I saw her to leave the house*”, because the verb *see* is followed by a bare infinitive when the infinitive is used.

The symbol * means that the phrase or sentence is incorrect. AmE means American English and BrE, British English. SVO means subject + verb + object, SVC, subject + verb + complement, SVO_iO_d, subject + (indirect) object + (direct) object, SVOC, subject + verb + object + complement, SVOA, subject + verb + object + adverbial, and SVOCA, subject + verb + object + complement + adverbial.

1

The finite verb versus the non-finite verb

A finite verb phrase is one that can be the main verb of a sentence. A non-finite verb phrase is an *infinitive*, *participles* (present and past), or a *gerund*. In the sentence “**Many people stay up late**

at night", we have "**stay up late at night**" as its predicate, in which the verb "**stay up**" is a finite verb. In the sentence "**He went to see his father yesterday**", *went* is a finite verb and *to see* is a non-finite verb to express purpose. A finite verb is one which predicates something of the subject of the sentence in which it is. A verb is not necessarily, however, always used as a finite verb. It can be used as a non-finite verb as well. In fact, the whole predicate including the verb may be transplanted into other sentences, where it is to have the function not of a **predicate** but of a **subject, an object, a predicative, a complement, an attributive, an adverbial, or an independent element**, as the case may be. In that case, it will be non-finite, i.e., *a gerund* (if it is tantamount to a noun) or *an infinitive* (if it is tantamount to a noun, an adjective or an adverb) or *a participle* (if it is tantamount to an adjective or an adverb). To continue with one of the above examples, which contains the predicate "**stay up late at night**", we can for illustration apply the same phrase in non-finite forms as follows:

- a. *To stay up late at night* is harmful to health.
(Infinitive used as noun, being the subject to the verb *is*.)
- b. *Staying up late at night* is harmful to health.
(Gerund, being the subject to the verb *is*.)
- c. I don't like *staying up late at night*.
(Gerund, being the object of the verb *like*.)
- d. I don't like *to stay up late at night*.
(Infinitive used as a noun, being the object of the verb *like*.)
- e. I don't hold with the idea of *staying up* late at night.
(Gerund, being object of the preposition *of*.)
- f. There is no need *to stay up late at night*.
(Infinitive used as adjective, post-modifying the noun *need*.)
- g. *To stay up late at night*, we relaid the fire with coal.
(Infinitive as adverb, modifying the verb *relaid*, showing the purpose, we *relaid*....)
- h. *Often staying up late at night*, he has been failing fast in health.
(Present participle used as adverbially, modifying the verb phrase *has been failing fast in the health*, showing the cause of failure.)
- i. Those *staying up late at night* do not realize the evils of doing so.
(Present participle is functioned as adjective, post-modifying the pronoun *those*.)
- j. What will impair your health is *staying/to stay up at night*.
(Gerund or infinitive is functioned as predicative.)

There are three non-finites in English – *the infinitive, the participles* (which have two forms, *the present participle* and *the past participle*), and *the gerund*, as described from the above examples. Some people use both *the present participle* and *the gerund* as the *-ing* form because they look the same in form – both having *the -ing* forms, but in this article the writer will discuss the use of *the infinitive* only.

2

The infinitive

Infinitive forms

	Active	Passive
Indefinite	to write	to be written
Perfect	to have written	to have been written
Continuous or progressive	to be writing	to be being written
Perfect continuous or progressive	to have been writing	to have been being written

From the above table, we do not usually have *to have been being written*, which sounds very awkward although it exists.

For example:

- a. Sandy is *to visit me next week*.
- b. I aim *to have finished the project by tomorrow*.
- c. He was seen *to be walking away*.
- d. He seems *to have been sitting there all day*.
- e. I asked for Mary *to be met by John*.
- f. She was found *to have been stabbed*.
- g. How would you like *to have been being scolded all day?* (rarely used)
- h. The picture is believed *to have been being painted for years*.
(passive perfect continuous infinitive, rarely used)
--- <https://www.grammarling.com/the-forms-of-the-infinitive>
- i. Anyone with half a brain (no one you know or are related to, of course) knows that any things you sign *have been being fought* for years (even decades) before you became president.
--- <https://www.yahoo.com/news/trump-tweets-john-legend-chrissy-teigen-filthy-mouthed-wife-133652820.html>

3

The voice/tense of the non-finite for infinitives

A The tense of the infinitive expresses time relatively to that of the main (or principal) verb. If the action expressed by the infinitive is of the same time as, or of later time than, that expressed by the main verb, the indefinite or continuous/progressive forms should be used, e.g.

- a. He seems **to know** the fact.
(= It seems *that he knows the fact*. Simple form shows simultaneous action, but for the progressive form **to be knowing** would be impossible, because **know** is a state verb, which is not used in a progressive form.)
- b. He seemed **to know** the fact. (= It seemed *that he knew the fact*.)
- c. He seems **to be working** hard at math.
(= It seems *that he is working hard at math*. Progressive form shows simultaneous action with that of **seems**.)
- d. I'm pleased **to meet** you. (The pleasure and the meeting are both in the present.)
- e. He was lucky **to win** \$1,000 in a slot machine. (The luck and winnings are both in the past.)
- f. That farm was reported **to be producing** more fish than the previous year.
(= It was reported *that the farm was producing more fish than the previous year*.)
- g. The country is known **to be** rich in natural resources.
(= It is known (to all) *that the country is rich in natural resources*.)
- h. He seems **to have done** a great deal of work.
(A perfect form shows prior action to that of **seems**. Also see the examples in **B** below.)
- i. He happens/appears/seems **to have been knocked down by a car**.
Cf. He happens/appears/seems *that he has been/was knocked down by a car*.
- j. He happens/appears/seems to be sleeping.
Cf. He happens/appears/seems *that he is sleeping*.

B Besides some examples in **A**, if the action expressed by the infinitive is of earlier time than that expressed by the main/principal verb, the perfect infinitive is usually used. That is, we use a perfect infinitive for something prior to the time in the main verb, e.g.

- a. He is said **to have gone** to Las Vegas. (= It is said that he has gone to Las Vegas.)
- b. The enemy was reported **to have been surrounded** three days before.
(= It was reported that the enemy had been surrendered three days before.)
- c. Sandy is known **to have been teaching** in the school for the past ten years.
(= It is known (to all) that Sandy has been teaching in the school for the past ten years.)
- d. I am sorry **to have kept** you waiting. (= I am sorry that I've kept you waiting.)
- e. I prefer **to have finished** the work before she comes.
- f. John seems **to have seen** Mary.
- g. I'm glad **to have met** you. (The *feeling* is in the present, but *meeting you* is in the past.)
- h. It's a pity that I missed the movie; I'd like **to have seen** it.
(**"To have seen it"** has the meaning of subjunctive mood.)
- i. The lady appeared **to have been drinking**.

Generally speaking, the perfect form and perfect progressive form refer to prior action or state, and the progressive form to simultaneous action or state in comparison with the predicative verb or predicate verb. The simple form of the infinitive has also time reference. It usually expresses simultaneous action or state in place of the progressive form, if the verb itself cannot normally have the progressive tense (see **a** in 3).

C The tense form of the complement infinitive

- a. They found the train **to have as many as 15 carriages**.
(Simple form shows simultaneous action, but for the progressive form ***to be having** would be impossible, because **have** here is a state verb, which does not have a progressive form in such a case.)
- b. When they go to the station, they found the train **to be just leaving**.
(A progressive form shows simultaneous action with **found**.)
- c. When they got to the station, they found the train **to have already left**.
(A perfect form shows prior action to that of **found**.)

D Like the finite verb, the non-finite verb can be put into a passive voice, if the meaning so required, as in

- a. I don't like **to be fooled** by flattery.
Cf. I don't like people **to fool** me by flattery.
- b. Here are three patients **to be operated on** immediately.
- c. It is necessary for the patient **to be operated on** immediately.
Cf. It is necessary (for us) **to operate on** the patient immediately.
- d. Most men die **to be forgotten** by posterity.

Sometimes we use a progressive infinitive from something happening over a period, as in

You're lucky **to be winning**. (You're winning at the moment.)

I am happy **to be working with you**. (Showing praise and personal positive colorful feelings)

We are sorry **to be leaving very soon**.

Cf. We are sorry that we are leaving very soon. (A progressive tense indicates something happening in the near future.)

If the subject or the understood subject of the sentence is also the logical object of the non-finite verb, then passive infinitive is used as seen above (e.g. I don't like **to be fooled** by flattery). More details are also described of the tenses and voice for the non-finite in each following section.

4

The infinitive used as subject

A Used like a noun

When the infinitive or the infinitive phrase is used as subject, its function is like that of a noun, as in

- a. *To smoke* is harmful to health. (*To smoke* is used as subject.)
- b. *To see* is to believe. (*To see* is used as subject.)
- c. *To know her* is to like her. (*To know her* is used as subject.)
- d. *To hesitate* is a pity/fatal. (*To hesitate* is used as subject.)
- e. *To turn down her offer* seems rude. (*To turn down her offer* is used as subject.)
- f. *Not to go back* was a mistake. (*Not to go back* is used as subject.)
- g. *For me to go there early* is unnecessary. (*For me to go there early* is used as subject.)
- h. It's good *for us to start early today*. (*For us to start early today* is used as a real subject.)
- i. It's silly *for anyone to be angry with her*. (*For anyone to be angry with her* is used as subject.)
- j. Isn't it a relief *for us to get together at last!* (*For us to get together at last* is used as subject.)

Note that in modern English, we move the real subject and use the anticipatory *it* (some people call *it* empty subject or introductory *it*) to represent the real subject. Thus, we can say "It is a pity/fatal to hesitate."

More examples:

- k. It was good *to see you*.
- l. It is a great pleasure *to meet you*.
- m. It's a great mistake not *to invite her to dinner*.
- n. It's necessary *to help her*. (= *To help her* is necessary.)
- o. It didn't occur to me *to do that sort of thing*.

B *For + logical subject + to do* construction

As examples shown from *g* to *j* in **A** above, we use the construction *for + logical subject + to do* when the logical subject of the infinitive is not the subject of the sentence (also see **21**), as in

- a. *For us to be invited to attend the conference* is a great honor.
 b. =It is a great honor *for us to be invited to attend the conference next week*.
 Cf. It is a great honor *for them to invite us* to attend the conference.

In such a case, if the construction, *for + logical subject + to do*, is long, we usually place it after the empty subject *it* as we can see Sentence *b* above. *For us to be invited to attend the conference next week* is longer than *it is a great honor*.

C *For + there + to be* construction

We can also use the *for + there + be* construction as subject, as in

- a. It is impossible *for there ever to be a conflict between our two nations*.
 (= It is impossible that *there will ever be* a conflict between our two nations.)
 b. It's a pity *for there to be any disagreement in the family*.
 c. It's impossible *for there to be a happier family*.

Also see 17.

D Tense and voice

1. In addition to what is described in 3 above, we can use a passive infinitive. In such a case, the passive infinitive is tantamount to a noun clause, as in

To be attacked (=That we are attacked) by them is not a bad thing.

2. When the action in the infinitive happens before that of predicative or predicate, a perfect infinitive (active or passive) is used, depending on its implication, as in

- a. *To have completed* (=That we had completed) *all work on time* was a triumph to us.
 b. *To have been killed* (=That she was killed) *in a car accident* is a great loss to her family.

3. A passive voice is used when the logical subject of the infinitive is also the object of the infinitive, as in

- a. It is a good idea *for John to be allowed* to use a calculator for the math test.
 (= It is a good idea *for the teacher to allow John* to use a calculator for the math test.)

In the above sentence, *John* is the logical subject of the infinitive, *to be allowed*, but it is also the logical object of the infinitive, *to allow John*.

More examples:

- b. It might be a bad idea for the beautiful picture *to be deleted*.
(= It might be a bad idea *for us to delete* the beautiful picture.)

4. Progressive and perfect tense

- a. It's not for me *to be talking like that*.
b. It's great *to have written such a wonderful report*.
c. It is a surprise to us for the girl *to have completed all math problems in such a short time*.
d. Is it possible for the book *to have been translated into Spanish by the end of this year*?
(= Is it possible *that we will have translated the book into Spanish by the end of this year*?)

5

Linking verbs + adjective + infinitive used as predicative

A *John is splendid to wait.*

In construction of **A**, the subject, *John*, of the linking verb, *is*, is also the logical subject of the non-finite *to wait*. In such a case, the empty subject, *it*, can be used with this construction, *of the logical subject to do*, as in

- a. John is splendid *to wait*.
Cf. It is splendid *of him* to wait.
b. Mary is brave *to chase* the running thief.
Cf. It is brave *of her* to chase the running thief.
c. The boys were *clever to solve* the math problem so quickly.
Cf. It was *clever of the boys* to solve the math problem so quickly.

The adjectives of this kind are: *brave, careless, clever, foolish, generous, good* (= kind), *helpful, honest, intelligent, kind, mean, nice, polite, rude, sensible, silly, stupid, wrong*, etc.
Also see **B** in 21.

B *He is hard to convince.*

In the construction of **B**, the subject, *he*, of the linking verb, *is*, is the object of the infinitive *to convince*. The adjective is here mainly predicating the information from the infinitive. In this construction, we can use the infinitive as a subject of the sentence or use empty subject *it*, as in

- a. He *is hard to convince*.
Cf. *To convince him is hard. It is hard to convince him.*
- b. He *is difficult to astonish*.
Cf. *To astonish him is difficult. It is difficult to astonish him.*
- c. She *is easy to deceive*.
Cf. *To deceive her is easy. It is easy to deceive her.*
- d. He *is convenient to send*.
Cf. *To send him is convenient. It is convenient to send him.*)
- e. The house *was difficult to find*.
Cf. *To find the house was difficult. It was difficult to find the house.*

It is also used with exclamatory sentences, as in

- f. *How difficult it was to find the house!*
- g. *Wasn't it difficult to find the house!*

If the adjective has an adverb form with the suffix *-ly* (i.e. *easy – easily*), a passive construction is possible since the subject of the main clause is also the logical object of the infinitive, as in

- h. She *is easily deceived*
Cf. She *is easy to deceive*

Moreover, since the subject is the logical object of the infinitive, we cannot add another object to the infinitive; therefore, we do not say **He is easy to convenience Lucy*. Adjectives of this kind are: *amusing, awful, cheap, convenient, dangerous, difficult, easy, expensive, extraordinary, funny, hard, horrible, important, impossible, improper, marvelous, inconvenient, interesting, nasty, nice, pleasant, safe, splendid, strange, unimportant, useful*, etc.

If the infinitive is intransitive verb, a preposition should be in its normal place (also see **3. in 12 below**), as in

- i. Sandy is pleasant *to talk to*. (Sandy is the logical object of the proposition, *to*.)
- j. This river is dangerous *to bathe in*.
- k. Good conversation is interesting *to listen to*.
- l. This is a very good pen *to write with*.
- m. She is easy *to get along with*.
Cf. It's easy *to get along with her*. How easy it is *to get along with her!*

Adjectives that have antonyms (e.g. *easy/difficult*) occur in this construction, but this is not always the case. *That man is impossible to work with* is acceptable, but **That man is possible*

to work with is not acceptable (Hornby 1975). However, we can say, *it's possible to work with that man*. Let's consider the following sentences:

- n. Our team is impossible to defeat. (= *To defeat our team* is impossible.)
- o. It's (im)possible to defeat our team.

When *our team* is used as the logical object of the infinitive *to win* or *to lose*, we don't use them as the subject in such a case. We do not say **Our team is possible to defeat*. **To win/lose our team is (im)possible*. **It is (im)possible to win/lose our team* (R.A. Close 1976). However, we can say: *Our team cannot win/lose/be defeated*.

In this construction, we can also use the infinitive to postmodify an adjective phrase, as in

- p. This is a hard nut to crack. (*To crack* postmodifying *a hard nut*)
Cf. The nut is hard to crack.
- q. She's an impossible woman to live with.
(*To live with* modifying *an impossible woman*)
Cf. She's impossible to live with. (Hornby 1975)

C *Sandy is anxious to please.*

The construction of **C** has volitional expressions, showing intention or (un)willingness, an emotional state (e.g. fear, sorrow, joy) or mental state (e.g. reluctance, surprise, etc.) or the reverse. The subject of the main verb is usually a person. *Please* has no logical object, but we can supply an object, e.g. *Sandy is anxious to please Casey*. In this construction, *Sandy* is not the logical object of the infinitive *to please*. We cannot use the infinitive as the subject or empty subject *it*. We can say: *Sandy is anxious to please Casey*, but we cannot say: **To please Sandy is anxious*. **It's anxious to please Sandy*.

We can use *feel*, *seem*, etc., as a linking verb besides the linking verb *be*, as in

- a. I *am/feel (rather) prone to agree with you*.
- b. He *is/seems reluctant/loath/disinclined/unwilling/hesitant to talk about the matter*.

Here are some examples of adjectives in this construction:

Feeling: *amuse, angry, content/contented, cross, desperate, fortunate, furious, glad, grateful, happy, hesitant, honored, horrified, humble, interested, jealous, likely/unlikely, miserable, pleased, proud, sad, sorry, surprised, thankful, thrilled, unhappy, etc.*

Willing/unwilling: *afraid, anxious, determined, eager, keen, impatient, prepared, ready, reluctant, unwilling, welcome, willing, etc.* Personal qualities: *mean, clever, sensible, right, silly, lucky, fortune, etc.*

Participles of this kind are: *ashamed, amazed, amused, annoyed, astonished, cheered, confused, delighted, determined, disappointed, dissatisfied, disinclined, disposed, disturbed, excited, flattered, gratified, grieved, honored, horrified, hurt, inclined, induced, infuriated, insulted, interested, moved, offended, pleased, prepared, provoked, relieved, satisfied, shocked, surprised, thrilled, vexed, worried, wounded, etc.*

They can be also premodified by adverbs such as *very, rather, quite*, etc.

More examples of this construction:

- c. He is happy *to see her again*.
(= He is happy because/when he sees her again or has seen her. **He** is also the logical subject of *to see her again*.)
- d. He is *sorry to hear it* (= He hears it and he is sorry).
- e. He must be *sorry to hear it* (= I assume he's sorry if he hears it.)
- f. I was sorry *to hear it* (= I heard it and I was sorry.)
- g. He is *anxious to see you*.
- h. I'm *glad/happy/relieved to know that she's safe and sound*.
- i. I am *quite prepared to help you*.
- j. She was *rather unhappy to go there*.
- k. You're *welcome/free to use my computer*.
- l. The children were *impatient to start*.

If the subject or time reference is different, we must say e.g. *I am sorry that you feel that way* or *I am sorry I was rude to you*. Sometimes we can use a perfect tense in the infinitive, as in

- m. I am sorry *to have missed him*.
= I am sorry (that) I have missed him, or I am sorry (that) I missed him.

In this construction when the subject of the infinitive is different from the subject of the main verb (the finite verb), we use *for + logical subject + to do* construction, as in

- n. Sandy is anxious *for Casey to repair her computers in her lab*.
- o. I'm *quite willing for your boyfriend to come join us for the dinner*.

D There are a small number of adjectives expressing speaker's opinion to make statement or ask questions - an indication of the speaker's attitude towards the future, not the indication from the subject of the sentence. These adjectives are *certain, likely, sure*, etc., as in

- p. Mr. Marlowe is *sure/certain to see Mr. Roser*.

(It is the speaker's attitude rather than Mr. Marlowe, who is sure.)

- q. Our team is (*un*)**likely to win**.
- r. We are **sure to need help**.
- s. Sandy is **certain to come**.

It is also used in *it* + *that*-clause construction, as in

- t. *It's **certain** that Mr. Marlowe will see Mr. Roser.*
- u. *It's **certain** that Sandy will join us.*
- v. *It's **likely/unlikely** that our team will win.*

(Im)probable is not followed by *to*-infinitive, but it is used with empty subject *it* or *that*-clause, as in

- It's **probable** that the weather will be fine.*
- It is **(im)probable** that he will come today.*
- The weather will **probably** be fine.*
- *The weather is **probable** to be fine.*
- *He is **(im)probable** to come today.*

E *He is slow to react.*

In the construction of **E**, the subject of the linking verb, *is*, is also the subject of the infinitive; its function is the same as **A**. We can convert the adjective adverbially, as in

- a. He was **slow to react**.
(= He **reacted slowly**.)
- b. George is **quick to take offence**.
(= George **takes offence quickly**.)
- c. The clothes are **easy to wash**.
(= It is **easy to wash the clothes**.)
- d. The clothes **wash easily**. (Quirk, et al 1972)

Adjectives of this kind are *hesitant, quick, reluctant, prompt, slow, willing*, etc.

F *He is furious to hear about it.*

In the construction of **F**, it has attitudinal expression. The infinitive expresses reason to the rest of the sentence (also see **C** in 14), as in

- a. I was **bored/furious to hear about it**.

(= *To hear about it bored me/infuriated me. It bored me /infuriated me to hear about it.*)

b. I was *indignant to hear about it.*

(= *It made me bored/furious/indignant to hear about it.*)

If an adjective like *indignant* above has no corresponding verb, we can use *make* as paraphrase (Quirk 1972). Adjectives of this kind are: *angry, content, furious, glad, happy, impatient, indignant, jubilant*, etc., and participles of this kind are: *annoyed, astonished, bored, concerned, delighted, depressed, disappointed, disgusted, (dis)satisfied, embarrassed, excited, fascinated, overwhelmed, perturbed, puzzled, surprised, worried*, etc.

G The construction *It was easy to dismantle an iPhone*

a. *It is rare* to see people still using a disk in a computer nowadays.

b. *It is difficult* to solve that math problem.

c. *It felt very strange* to be watched by so many people. (Eastwood 2002)

In this construction the anticipatory *it* or empty subject *it* represents the real subject – the infinitive phrase – in the sentence. Adjectives used in this construction are: *advisable, amusing, awful, bad, better, best, careless, cheap, clever, common, confusing, convenient, dangerous, depressing, dreadful, difficult, easy, embarrassing, essential, exciting, expensive, foolish, generous, good, great, hard, helpful, horrible, important, impossible, incredible, intelligent, interesting, kind, lovely, marvelous, mean, natural, necessary, nice, normal, odd, perfect, pleasant, polite, possible, right, rude, safe, sensible, silly, stupid, terrible, vital, rare, strange, terrific, understandable, usual, wonderful, wrong, etc.* Also see **K** below.

H We often use *be to do ...* for an official arrangement, order or plan, as in

a. Our principal *is to observe* my teaching on Friday. (arrangement)

b. No one *is to leave* the building without permission. (order)

c. Ms. R and I *are to meet* at the airport at eight o'clock tomorrow. (arrangement)

d. How *am I to pay* my debts? (plan)

e. The new building *is to be* ten stories high. (plan)

f. The meeting *is to be held* next week. (plan)

The *be* is often omitted in headlines, e.g.

The President to Visit Las Vegas

Cf. *The President is to visit Las Vegas.*

I The constructions *too + adjective or adverb + to-infinitive* and the construction *adjective, adverb or noun + enough + infinitive*, as in

1. *Too ... to do ... construction*

- a. He was *too weak to climb the wall*. (after the adjective, *weak*)
- b. The river is *too cold to swim in*. (after the adjective, *cold*)
- c. The problem is *too difficult/impossible to solve*. (after the adjectives *difficult/impossible*)
- d. The bridge was *too narrow to cross*. (after the adjective, *narrow*)
- e. I came *too late to prevent him from going there*. (after the adverb, *late*)
- f. It moves *too quickly for most people to see (it)*. (after the adverb, *quickly*. Quirk, et al 1972)
- g. She is *too nice a girl to refuse*.
- h. The weather in Las Vegas is *too hot for anyone to eat outside*.

Note that the subjects of some sentences above are also the logical objects of the infinitive: *to swim in the river* (in b.), *to solve the problem* (in c.), *to cross the bridge* (in d.), etc. When the logical subject is not the subject of the sentence, *for + logical subject* is used after *too ...to do* construction, as in

- i. The bridge was *too narrow for the truck to cross*. (after the adjective, *narrow*)

When *too + adjective* is used, the following noun is usually a singular countable noun. It cannot be a noun in a plural form or an uncountable noun. Thus, we do not say:

- j. *They are *too nice girls to refuse*. (*Girls* is a noun in a plural form.)
- k. *It is *too good food* to throw away. (*Food* is an uncountable noun. Quirk, et al 1972)

But we can say *It's food (which is) too good to throw away*.

2. *Adjective, adverb or noun + enough + infinitive construction*

- a. The bridge was *not wide enough for the truck to cross*. (after the adjective, *wide*)
- b. They were driving *fast enough to attract attention*. (*Fast* is an adverb.)
- c. He was *not strong enough to lift the weight*. (after the adjective, *strong*)
- d. We have *enough money to last*.
- e. I am *fool enough to believe her*. (*Fool* is a noun.)
(*I am *a fool* enough to believe her. *Fool* is a noun.)
- f. Are you *man enough to do this dangerous job?*
(*Are you *a man* enough to do this ...?)
- g. He was *gentleman enough to help her*.
(*He was *a gentleman* enough to help her.)
- h. She was *scholar enough to read the inscription*.
(*She was *a scholar* enough to read)

When **enough** is used to postmodify a countable noun in this construction, the indefinite article, **a** or **an** is not used as seen from the last four sentences (from *e* to *h*) above, but when the infinitive is not used, the indefinite article can be used, therefore, the following sentences are normal, as in

- She is a good-tempered **enough girl**. (*Enough* is used to postmodify **a good-tempered**.)
- She is a good-tempered girl **enough**. (*Enough* is used to postmodify **a good-tempered girl**.)

J Voice

After an adjective phrase in this construction above, the **active voice** in the infinitive is usually used rather than a passive, as in

- a.* The table is **too heavy to move**.
- b.* The chair is **not strong enough to sit on**.

When the **by** and the agent are used, a passive is used, as in

- c.* The table is too heavy **to be moved by a ten-year-old boy**.
(= The table is too heavy **for a ten-year-old boy to move**.)

K *It* used with verbs such as **appear, feel, happen, prove, seem, sound, turn out, etc.**

The verbs above are linking verbs. Their subjects are usually introduced by anticipatory **it** (also see **G** above), as in

- a.* **It seems** a pity **to waste** so much money.
- b.* **It sounds** reasonable **to do** it this way.
- c.* **It appears** unlikely for us **to win** the game

Besides these verbs above, we also have some intransitive verbs such as **suffice, do, and remain, etc.**, the subjects of which are also **it**, as in

- d.* It will **suffice** to get a few more people.
- e.* It won't **do** for a student to cheat in his test.
- f.* It **remains** to choose a partner and to fix the date.
- g.* It **does** no good to say anything.
- h.* It **didn't occur** to me to do that sort of thing.

The infinitive of these verbs above is not used as an object, because these verbs are intransitive verbs. They can be followed by a **that**-clause, e.g.

- i. It happened *that we met at the bar*. (Cf. We *happened to meet at the bar*.)
- j. It seems *that her iPhone has been stolen/lost*. (Cf. Her iPhone *seems to have been stolen/lost*.)

And the verbs relating to the expression of mood or feeling are also used this way. They are: *amuse, annoy, delight, cost, irk, irritate, make, need, require, take, etc.*, as in

- k. *It delighted me to have met* you.
- l. *It irritated her to be forced* to do it all over again.
- m. *It made* Mr. Marlowe excited. (= It excited Mr. Marlowe) *to have* his greenhouse rebuilt.)
- n. *It took* us a few hours to complete the experiment in Sandy's lab.

L *Wh*-words followed by infinitive used as predicative

Sometimes, some of the *wh*-words followed by infinitive can be used as predicative or subject complement (also see A in 6), as in

- a. My question is *where to start the project*.
- b. The problem is *which to do next*.
- c. *Who to turn to* is what Mr. Marlowe wants to know.
Cf. What Mr. Marlowe wants to know is *who to turn to*.

M The infinitive used in exclamatory sentences introduced by *how* and *what* in *it + be* construction

The infinitive is used in predicative introduced by *how* and *what* in *it + be* construction, but the *it + be* is usually omitted (Hornby 1976), as in

- How* nice (it is) *to sit* here with you!
- How* much wiser (it would have been) *to reduce* speed!
- What* a pity (it is) *to waste* them!
- What* a pleasant surprise (it was) *to be told* that I'd have been promoted!
- How* hard it was for him *to live* on \$300 a month!
- What* a pity it is for them not *to attend the party*!

6

Infinitive used in predicative

In addition to what is described in 5, we continue to discuss the use of the infinitive in SVC construction. The subject of the sentence can usually be a noun, a noun phrase, a noun clause, or an infinitive.

A Nouns used as subject and an infinitive used as predicative

- a. *The first step* is *to remove the lid to let the water out*. (*The first step* is a noun phrase. *To remove the lid ...* is used as predicative.)
- b. *My task today* is *to help you*. (*My task today* is a noun phrase.)
- c. *My aim* was *to help* you. (*My aim* is a noun phrase.)
- d. *His greatest pleasure* is *to sit in the casino, playing games*. (*His greatest pleasure* is a noun phrase.)
- e. *The most important thing* is *not to waste money*.
(*The most important thing* is a noun phrase.)
- f. *Her plan* is *to make better use of these medicinal herbs*. (*Her plan* is a noun phrase.)
- g. *My goal* is *to complete the work on time*.
- h. *Your mistake* was *to write her that nasty letter*.
- i. *The point* is *what to do it*.
- j. *The issue* is *which one to give the reward to*.
- k. *The question* is *when to call the principal*.

In such a case, the subject usually contains such nouns as *aim, ambition, duty, hope, idea, intention, mistake, plan, purpose, suggestions, etc.* The *wh*-words followed by the infinitive are also used as predicative as described from *h* to *k* above.

B A noun clause or *wh*-words (*who, what, which, where, when, how, etc.*) used as subject and an infinitive used in predicative

Usually an infective used as predicative after the subject introduced by a noun clause consisting of superlative words such as *the best, the worst, or all (that), the only, wh-words, etc.*, as in

- a. *What I want* is *to get to the airport as early as possible*. (*What I want* is a noun clause. *To get to the airport ...* is used as predicative or subject complement.)
- b. *What I really wanted to do* was *drive all night*. (bare infinitive used in predicative)
- c. *All I did* was *empty the bottle*. (bare infinitive)
- d. *The worse you can do* is *become very drowsy*. (bare infinitive used in predicative)
- e. *The best way to do* was *wait until the result came out*. (bare infinitive used in predicative)
- f. *The only thing I can do now* is *go on by myself*. (bare infinitive used in predicative)
- g. *What worries us most* is *where to find the man*.

Also see *for the omission of the infinitive sign, to*, in 29

C Infinitive

- a. To see is **to believe**. (*To believe* is used as predicative – SVC.)
- b. To decide is **to act**. (*To act* is used as predicative – SVC.)
- c. To be kind to the enemy is **to be cruel to the people**. (*To be cruel to the people* is used as a predicative – SVC.)

Besides the linking verb **be**, we use the verbs such as **appear, seem, happen**, as in

- d. He **seemed** not to pay much attention to what I was saying. (SVC)
- e. He **seemed** (to be) unable to get out of the habit. (SVC)
- f. I **can't seem** to solve this math problem.
(Cf. I **seem** (to be) unable to solve the math problem.)
- g. He **couldn't seem** to get out of the habit.
(Cf. He **seemed** (to be) unable to get out of the habit.
Note: When **can't** or **couldn't** is used with **seem** above, it negates the infinitive.)
- h. This **appears** (to be) an important matter.
- i. He **appears** to have many friends.
- j. She **happened** to be out when I called her.
- k. She **happened** to be killed by shark.

7

Tense and voice in predicative

Generally speaking, the tense is usually a simple tense – **subject + is/was + to do**, and active voice is used, too, as in

- a. My task **is** to **help** you today.
- b. What I wanted **was** to **finish** the work as quickly as possible.

1. Passive

Sometimes we use passive in predicative when the subject of the sentence is also the logical object of the infinitive, as in

- a. He is nowhere **to be seen/to be found**.
Cf. He's nowhere for us **to see/find him**.
- b. What she feared most was **to be found out**.
Cf. She feared that people would **find her out**. (She may have done something dishonest.)
- c. All she wanted was **to be left alone**.
Cf. She wanted people to leave **her** alone.

When we use *for + logical subject + to do* construction, a passive is used as described above because the logical subject is actually the logical object of the infinitive.

More examples:

- d. Their suggestion was *for the plan to be discussed* by all the students.
Cf. Their suggestion was that the plan should be discussed by all the students.
- e. One of the decisions taken at the meeting was *for Spanish to be taught* in all schools.

Note that the sentences below from *f* to *i* are used in active voice, but they have passive meaning, as in

- f. The house *is to let* (= to be let) on temporary basis.
- g. I *am not to blame*. (= I am not at fault; the fault does not lie with me)
- h. I don't know if Sandy *is to blame*.
- i. A lot *remains to do*.
- j. I *am to be blamed* for my negligence. (= I am going to be blamed.)

2. Progressive

- a. All she wants is *to be working with you now*.
- b. His wish is *to be living in Las Vegas*.
- c. All I want is *for someone to be thinking about me*.
- d. I am pleased *to be working with you*.

The progressive is used in the infinitive above to imply the emphasis of personal colorful feelings/attitude toward the statement of discourse. Also see C in 9.

3. Perfect

- a. John was *to have come back yesterday*, but he was sick.
(*To have come back yesterday* has the meaning of subjunctive mood in the construction of *was/were to have done*.)
- b. His achievement is *to have produced a new method of calculation*.
Cf. His achievement is that he has produced a new method of calculation.
- c. The socialists seem *to have been elected*.
Cf. It seems that the socialists have been elected.

Sometimes the perfect infinitive is also used to postmodify a noun or noun phrase, which corresponds somewhat to a relative clause, as in

- d. Mr. Marlowe was the last *to have entered the greenhouse* before it caught fire.

(= Mr. Marlowe was the last *who had entered/entered the greenhouse* before it caught fire.)

8

The infinitive used as object

He began *to work early in the morning every day*. (SVO)

This is SVO construction – subject (*He*) + verb (*began*) + object (*to work ...*). In such a construction, the subject of the sentence is also the logical subject of the infinitive. The following verbs usually take an infinitive used as object: *afford, agree, aim, apply, ask, can't wait, choose, claim, dare, decide, demand, desire, determine, endeavor, expect, come on (begin), guarantee, hope, learn, long, manage, mean (intend), offer, pretend, promise, refuse, seek, swear, threaten, train, undertake, want, wish*, etc., e.g.

- a. I agreed *to use a school computer to do my assignment*. (SVO)
(The logical subject of the infinitive *to use* is *I*.)
- b. I expected *to meet Ms. Roden*. (SVO)
- c. She means *to do better*. (SVO)
- d. He wants *to pay a visit to his friend in Las Vegas*. (SVO)
- e. She likes *to get up early*. (SVO)
- f. What did Mr. R say she wanted *to do*? (SVO)
- g. She pretended not *to see me* while she was walking by. (SVO)

We can also use the following verbs in SVOC construction: *advise, allow, ask, beg, beseech, bribe, cause, challenge, command, compel, dare (=challenge), direct, drive (=compel), empower, enable, encourage, entice, entitle, entreat, expect, forbid, force, help, impel, implore, incite, induce, instruct, intend, invite, know, lead, mean (=intend), oblige, order, permit, persuade, predispose, press (=urge), recommend, remind, request, require, teach, tell, tempt, urge, warn, etc.*, in SVOC construction, as in

- h. I expected *Mr. Roser to meet you*. (SVOC)
- i. She told me not *to go there alone*. (SVOC)

Sometimes the infinitive is used as object and its function is tantamount to an object clause, as in

- j. I hope *to be able to attend the meeting*.
Cf. I hope that I will be able/I am able to attend the meeting.
- k. I expect *to have finished writing this chapter by next Friday*.
Cf. I expect that I will have finished writing this chapter by next Friday.
- l. He considers her *to be very trustworthy*.
Cf. He considers that she is very trustworthy.

- m.* I think it strange for her *to meet him*.
Cf. I think it strange that she'd/will meet him.

Also see **The infinitive used as part of complex object or SVOC in 16** about “I think *it* a good idea *to go there*”, where *it* represents the real object *to go there* (see SVOC in **18**).

9

Tense and voice in the infinitive used as object

In SVO construction, when the infinitive is used as object, the finite verb is usually not converted into passive. Therefore, the following is incorrect:

- a.* She likes *to get up early*.
b. **To get up early is liked by her*.

It is not easy for us to convert an object from SVO or SVOC into a passive voice. However, we can have a few verbs to convert them into passive when we use the empty subject *it* as subject of the passive sentence. These verbs are *decided, desired, hope, intend, plan, propose, suggest*, etc., as in

- c.* *It was proposed* to hold another meeting for that student.
d. *It has been decided* to enroll more students for our school next year.

A When the subject of the sentence is not the logical subject of the infinitive, but the logical object of the infinitive, a passive voice is used

- e.* He asked *to be sent to Iraq*.
Cf. He asked us to send *him* to Iraq.
f. She doesn't like *to be criticized for nothing*.
Cf. She doesn't like them to criticize *her* for nothing.
g. The president stood up *to be seen better*.
Cf. The president stood up so that other people could see *him* better.

B A perfect (progressive) infinitive is used when we express the action in the infinitive happens before the predicate (active or passive) or predicative (active or passive)

- a.* Sandy may claim *to have done 10 experiments in the past year*.
Cf. Sandy may claim *that she has done 10 experiments in the past year*.
b. The girl pretended *to have been the victim of the threats*.
Cf. The girl pretended *that she had been/was the victim of the threats*.

- c. He is believed **to have been working hard** in the past few weeks.
Cf. It is believed *that she has been working hard in the past few weeks.*
We believe *that she has been working hard in the past few weeks.*
- d. We considered him **to have been foolish**.
- e. She wished **to have been working hard** in the school with friends.
- f. They should like **to have been invited**, but the principal ignored them.
- g. How would you like **to have been being scolded** all day? (rarely used)

1. A perfect infinitive (of some verbs) is used to predict that the action in the infinitive will be completed by a certain time in the (near) future, as in

- a. We hope **to have completed** the project by next Friday
Cf. We hope *that we will have completed the project by next Friday*
- b. She expects **to have finished** the repair by the day after tomorrow.
Cf. She expects *that she will have finished the repair by the day after tomorrow.*
- c. We expect **to have been admitted** into the organization by the end of this year.
- d. By the beginning of next month, I hope **to have seen** her.
- e. I rejoice **to have finished** it so soon.

2. A perfect infinitive (of some verbs) is used to indicate something that is unfulfilled, not realized, or not carried out. These verbs are usually in reference to wish or intention. They are: **expect, hope, intend, mean, suppose, want, wish**, and **should like, was/were to have done, etc.**, as in

- a. I **should like to have called** you the other day, but I forgot.
- b. She **intended to have told** me about what had happened to her last week.
- c. Mr. Marlowe **expected to have reached** the top of the mountain by noon, but the bad weather stopped him.
- d. I **meant to have told** you what was going on last night, but I decided not to.
- e. I thought it wrong **to have helped** her. (the hypothetical)
- f. I **wanted to have seen** you ever so much, but I did not like to bother you.
- g. I **expected** the door **to have opened**, but it did not. It remained shut.
- h. We **were to have been married** in Las Vegas last year, but we didn't get married.
- i. He **was to have repaired** the computer yesterday, but he didn't.

Generally speaking, the above examples have the meaning of subjunctive mood. Moreover, we can use a perfect tense in the main clause rather than the perfect infinitive, with no practical difference in meaning, as in

- j. She **had intended** to tell me about what had happened to her last week.
Cf. She **intended to have told** me about what had happened to her last week.

- k. Mr. Marlowe **had expected** to reach the top of the mountain by noon, but the bad weather stopped him.

Cf. Mr. Marlowe **expected** to have reached the top of the mountain by noon, but

Note that “Mr. Marlowe **had expected to have reached** the top of the mountain by noon, but the bad weather stopped him” is also acceptable, but we have a definitely redundant sentence.

When the verb **hope** is used in the past perfect tense, it indicates the past hope was not realized, as in

We **had hoped** that she would soon be well again. (Hornby 1975)

C Progressive used in the infinitive

A progressive is used (in SVO and SVOC) to express or emphasize a certain action that was happening then, is happening now, or will happen in the (near) future (also see 2. In 7), as in

- a. He is believed **to be coming**.
Cf. It is believed that *he is coming*.
We believe *that he is coming*.
- b. He seems **to be enjoying himself**.
Cf. It seems (that) he is enjoying himself.
- c. I am glad **to be meeting you**.
Cf. I am glad that I am meeting you now.
- d. I would like **to be having lunch** at home now.
- e. You don't need **to be working in a great hurry now**; we have plenty of time.
- f. They didn't expect the boys **to be sitting quietly in the classroom**.
(The boys were sitting quietly in the classroom.)
- g. I believe you **to be sending your email to your boss**.
Cf. You are sending your email to your boss now.
- h. I don't want you **to be working so hard like this**. (You are working so hard now.)
- i. I felt myself **to be missing something**.
- j. They are said **to be working diligently**. They are working diligently.
Cf. It's said that they are working diligently.
- k. He is supposed **to be looking for something** he wants to use.
Cf. He is looking for something he wants to use.

D Passive

The infinitive postmodifier can be passive when the postmodified noun or noun phrase is also the logical object of the infinitive. In such a case, the passive used can express tense and mood - something that *will/can/must/should happen* or *happens*, as in

- a. The case ***to be investigated*** next week is of great importance to the government.
Cf. The case that ***will be invited*** or ***is to be investigated*** next week
- b. The animal ***to be found*** in China is dangerous.
Cf. The animal which/that ***can be*** or ***is found*** in China is dangerous.
- c. The case ***to be investigated*** is rather delicate.
Cf. The case which/that ***will be investigated*** is rather delicate.
- d. This will be the procedure ***to be followed***.
Cf. This will be the procedure that ***should be followed***.
- e. Here is a telegram ***to be sent***.
Cf. Here is the telegram that ***should be sent***.
- f. The rules ***to be followed*** by students are essential to the school safety.
Cf. The rules that/which ***must*** or ***should*** or ***will be followed by students***
- g. This scholar, ***to be seen daily in the library***, has devoted his life to the history of Nevada.
Cf. This scholar, ***who can be seen*** ..., has devoted

If a verb, especially an intransitive verb, is used as a non-finite attributive, its infinitive may sometimes correspond to its present participle. Thus:

- h. I'll do my best in the months ***to come***
Cf. I'll do my best in the ***coming*** months.
- i. The last woman ***to arrive*** at the station was Sandy.
Cf. The last woman ***arriving*** at the station was Sandy

Attention should be paid to the fact that when the indirect object (a person) is also the logical subject of the infinitive and the direct object (a thing) is also the logical object of the infinitive, an active voice is usually used, as in

- j. Would you please lend me a book ***to read***? (NOT *to be read*)

Because the action of ***to read*** is ***me***, and ***me*** is the logical subject of the infinitive, ***to read***, although ***a book*** is the logical object of ***to read***, therefore, an active voice is usually used in the infinitive clause, especially for these verbs: ***buy, get, lend, etc.*** More examples:

- k. She bought her daughter a Laptop ***to use during the conference***. (NOT *to be used*)

- l.* Please get me a cup of water to drink. (NOT *to be drunk*)

10

Wh-words + *to do* and *there + be* constructions

The infinitive preceded by *wh*-words can be used as an object. These *wh*-words are: *who, whom, which, what, where, when, how, whether* (but not *if* or *why*) to form a noun phrase. The following verbs can be used with *wh*-words. They are: *advise, ask, choose, consider, decide, discover, discuss, explain, find out, forget, guess, hear, imagine, inquire, know, learn, observe, perceive, remember, see, settle, show, teach, tell, think (= consider), understand, wonder (= to be curious to know), etc.* The phrase is virtually a construction of an indirect question. The logical subject of the infinitive is also the subject of the sentences, as in

- a.* I don't know ***what to say/where to go/who or whom to ask/when to stop/how to pay.***
Cf. I don't know *what I should say/where I should go/ who(m) I should ask/when I should stop* and *how I should pay.*
- b.* We haven't decided ***when to hold the meeting***
Cf. We haven't decided *when we will/should hold the meeting.*
- c.* I don't know ***where to meet her.***
Cf. I don't know *where I'll meet her.*
- d.* We must discuss ***whether to follow his suggestion or not.***
Cf. We must discuss *whether we should follow his suggestion or not.*
- e.* *I don't know ***why to go there.*** (We don't use *why* in such a case.)
- f.* Remember ***when to turn in the assignment.***
- g.* She learned (***how***) ***to use the software.*** (*How* is optional.)
- h.* Mr. Roser taught me (***how***) ***to solve the math problem.***

When ***subject + verb + indirect object + direct object*** (SVO_i O_d) is used, the logical subject of the infinitive is also the object of the main verb. Here the direct object is formed by *wh*-words *to do* construction, as in

- i.* Please advise me ***which to buy.*** (SVO_iO_d, *me* is the indirect object, which is also the logical subject of *to buy*, and ***which to buy*** the direct object.)
Cf. Please advise me which one I'll buy.
- j.* Tell her ***what to do next.*** (SVO_iO_d)
Cf. Tell her *what she will do next.*
- k.* Show me ***how to solve the math problem.***
Cf. Show me *how I'll/can solve the math problem.*
- l.* Please show me ***how to do it***

- Cf. Show me *how I will/should do it*.
- m. Can you tell me **which way to go**?
- Cf. Can you tell me *where I should go*?

In the last two sentences above, **me** is the object of the main verb, **show** and **tell**, respectively, but the logical subject of the following infinitives is also **me**. After **what**, **which**, **whose**, **how many**, and **how much**, a noun or noun phrase can be followed, as in

- a. Sandy did not know **which way to go**.
Cf. Sandy did not know which way she should go.
- b. She was not sure **how much water to add**.
Cf. She was not sure how much water she should add.
- c. I don't know **what size to buy**.
- d. John did not know **whose name to write**.
1. The **wh-words** + **the infinitive** construction can also be used as object after a preposition, as in
- e. I was worried **about what to tell her**.
(**What to tell her** is used as object of the preposition **about**.)
- f. There's the problem **of how much money to take**.
(**How much ...** is used as object of the preposition **of**.)
- g. I have no idea **about what to do next**.

2. **There to be** construction used as the object (also see 17), as in

- a. The rule permits **there to be no more than hundred people in the conference room**.
- b. We understood **there to be money available**.
- c. You wouldn't want **there to be another war**.
- d. I don't want **there to be any trouble**.
- e. He meant **there to be no indiscipline**.
- f. Would you like **there to be another meeting to reevaluate that project**?
- g. I expect **there to be no argument about the matter**.
- h. I should prefer **there to be another meeting for this issue**.
- i. We'd prefer **there to be at least three adults in charge on the field trip**.

11

The infinitive used as object of a preposition

Suffice it to say that only the gerund or a noun should be used as the object of a preposition, that is, a gerund can be used as an object of a preposition, but a few prepositions can be followed by an infinitive or a bare infinitive. These prepositions are: *except, but, than, rather than, about, save, besides*, etc., as in

- a. He was *about to die* (= near death).
(*To die* is used as the object of the preposition, *about*.)
- b. They desired nothing *except to succeed*.
(*To succeed* is used as the object of the preposition, *except*.)
- c. They desired nothing *but to succeed*.
(*To succeed* is used as the object of the preposition, *but*.)
- d. He seldom came *except to look at my pictures*.
- e. He did nothing else *than laugh*. (*Laugh* is used as an object of the preposition, *than*.)
- f. You've done nothing *but grumble all morning*.
- g. As for the housework, I do everything *except cook*.
- h. He did nothing *but* (=except) *laugh* (bare infinitive used after preposition, *but*)
- i. I decided to write *rather than telephone*.
- j. *Sooner than travel by air*, I'd prefer a week on a big liner. (Quirk, et al 1972)
- k. *Rather than cause trouble*, I'm going to forget the whole affair.
- l. What *had she done* for her father *save leave* him at the first opportunity?
- m. I hardly remember what I *did besides read*.
- n. That afternoon I had nothing *to do besides answer letters*.
- o. What *has he done besides read* the paper?

Also see **Bare infinitives used after some prepositions** in 30.

12

The infinitive used as attributive (postmodifier or premodifier)

A Postmodifier

A postmodifier is a modifier that follows the noun or the noun phrase. The infinitive used as postmodifier is also (in most of the cases) comparable with a relative clause in function, but the infinitive does not show time reference except, perhaps, in the case of the passive infinitive, which nearly always has a future reference.

1. The infinitive phrase corresponding to a relative clause is usually preceded by the adjectives such as *next* and *last*, an ordinal number, a noun, or a superlative, e.g.
 - a. *The next ship to arrive* was the Elizabeth.

- Cf. The next ship *which arrived was* the Elizabeth.
- b. Mr. Roser was always ***the first to come*** but ***the last to leave***.
Cf. Mr. Roser was always the first *who came* but the last *who left*.
- c. An expert will be ***the best man to consult***.
Cf. An expert will be the best man you *should consult*.
- d. He is not ***a man to bow*** before difficulties.
Cf. He is not a man *who bows* before difficulties.
- e. We need ***someone to help*** us repair the machine.
Cf. We need someone *who can help* us repair the machine.
2. Sometimes, the infinitive may correspond to an elliptical relative clause in which a subject of indefinite reference has been omitted, e.g.
- a. The time ***to arrive*** is 8 p.m.
Cf. The time ***when*** (= *at which*) we should arrive is 8 p.m.
- b. The place ***to go*** is Las Vegas.
Cf. The place ***where*** you should go is Las Vegas.
- c. A good place ***to visit*** is Las Vegas.
Cf. A good place ***that/which*** we will/should visit is Las Vegas.
3. When a noun or a noun phrase is the logical object of the preposition, the preposition comes in its normal place, e.g.
- a. There's ***nothing*** to get excited ***about***. (*Nothing* is the logical object of *about*.)
- b. I have ***nothing*** really to complain ***about***. (*Nothing* is the logical object of *about*.)
- c. She has ***five children*** to look ***after***. (*Five children* is the logical object of *after*.)
- d. Ms. R is looking for ***a room*** to live ***in***. (*A room* is the logical object of *in*.)
Cf. Ms. R is looking for a room *where she can live*.
- e. He gave me ***a quarter*** to call you ***with***.
Cf. He gave me a quarter *with which I can call you*.
- f. I'm looking for ***something*** to clean the carpet ***with***.
Cf. I'm looking for something *with which I can clean the carpet*.
- g. I use ***a pen*** to write ***with***.
- h. I've bought ***this chair*** to sit ***in***.
Cf. I've bought this chair *where/in which I can sit*.
- i. He is not ***a man*** to trifle ***with***.
- j. She has given me ***much*** to think ***about***.

But in formal English, we usually use an infinitive clause with a preposition in front, as in

- k. I need a can to put some paint ***in***.

- Cf. I need a can *in which to put some paint*.
- l. Ms. R is looking for a room to live *in*
Cf. Ms. R is looking for a room *in which to live* or *where she can live*.
- m. He gave me a quarter to call you *with*.
Cf. He gave me a quarter *with which to call you*.
- n. Ms. Roden had no time left *in which to pack* her things.
- o. It was a bad season *in which to have* outings.
- p. After the harvest, the farmers select their best produce *with which to pay* their tax to the state.

When the noun is in reference to *time, place, way*, etc., the preposition can be omitted, as in

- q. He is looking for *a place to live*. (*in* being omitted after *live*, especially in AmE)
Cf. He is looking for a place where he can live.
He is looking for a place to live *in*.
- r. Some people say *the best way to travel* is on foot.
Cf. Some people say the best way they can travel is on foot.)
4. When the infinitive is used as postmodifier, most of what is postmodified is a noun or a noun phrase, which is usually in reference to the content of the infinitive. In such a case, the noun is corresponding to a verb or adjective, as in

- a. She expressed *her wish to visit Las Vegas*.
(*Wish* is a noun. *To visit Las Vegas* is used to postmodify the noun phrase, *her wish*.)
Cf. She **wished** to visit Las Vegas.
- b. *His refusal to help* was disappointing.
Cf. He **refused** to help, and this disappointed us.
- c. He made *a promise not to do that again*.
Cf. He **promised** not to do that again.
- d. Her *anxiety to go* was obvious.
Cf. She was obviously **anxious** to go.
- e. He was filled with *ambition to become famous*.
Cf. He was very **ambitious** to become famous.
- f. She was dying with *curiosity to know* where we had been.
Cf. She was **curious** to know where we had been.

For the above construction, we usually have the following words such as: *ability, agreement, anxiety, aptitude, attempt, ambition, campaign, chance, claim, courage, curiosity, decision, desire, determination, eagerness, efforts, evidence, failure, fight, hope, impatience, intention, means, measures, movement, need, patience, plan, power, promise, opportunity, position,*

refusal, reluctance, reason, resolution, right, skill, strength, struggle, tendency, threat, willingness, wish, etc.

B Premodifier

Generally speaking, an infinitive with *to* or bare infinitive cannot be used as premodifier, therefore, we do not say **a to visit boy*, which does not make any sense. However, an infinitive with *to* or bare infinitive can be used as premodifier when a negative word such as *not* and *never* is used along with passive voice in the infinitive, sometimes used with a hyphen, as in

this never-to-be forgotten day
her not-to-be deprived rights
not-to-be-tolerated cruelties
a not to be handled iPhone
do-or-die policy (bare infinitive)

Instead of a negative word used with passive voice used in it, sometimes we use other words, a noun, an adverb, an adjective, or a bare infinitive, etc. Such combination, a hyphen usually used, is regarded as an adjective or noun phrase. Some of them already become idiomatic expressions, as in

the about-to-be-released prisoner
those least-to-be-forgotten events
the much-to-be-longed-for place
a give-and-take policy
a take-it-or-leave-it attitude
a couldn't-care-less philosophy
soon-to-be-united country
an easy-to-use reference book
a difficult-to-solve math problem
a well-to-do family
wait-to-see attitude
hit-and-run war
hit-or-miss reading
do-or-die policy
take-home pay
go-to-meeting costumes
pay-as-you-earn system
His speeches were always full of pat-you-on-the-back optimism.

The mom-to-be was screaming in the passenger seat when Jean-Louis stopped his car. --- <https://www.yahoo.com/news/florida-deputy-pulled-over-driver-131659207.html>

13

The infinitive used as appositive

The infinitive with *to* (some people called it the infinitive clause) is used as apposition to the noun or noun phrase and gives the further explanation of the meaning of the noun or noun phrase. In such a case, a hyphen, or sometimes comma, is used for the non-restrictive infinitive clause, as in

- a. Our task, *to raise \$1000.00 by selling T-shirts*, was accomplished by yesterday.
- b. This last appeal, *to come and visit him*, was never delivered. (Quirk, et al 1972)
- c. Soon came the order *to start the general attack*.
- d. We got the instruction *to leave the city immediately*.
- e. He came to visit Las Vegas for the same reason, *to win money from casinos*.

This is not always the same case, sometimes we have restrictive apposition and the appositive would correspond to the finite clause introduced by a *that*-clause, as in

- f. The appeal *to join the movement* was well received.
Cf. The appeal *that we should join the movement* was well received.

Besides, the infinitive clause is used after a word (usually a pronoun or numeral), as in

- g. We also had quite a number of visitors, *some to see us off, some to fetch things*, and *some to do both*. (Each infinitive clause is preceded with *some*.)
- h. She has written two articles for the journal, *one to be published in this issue, the other to come out in the next*.

14

The Infinitive used as adverbial

An adverbial of **purpose** and **result** is usually indistinguishable, so they are treated together. An adverbial of purpose can, however, usually be expanded into *in order to* or *so as to* phrase.

A Purpose

- a. He came *to see the performance*. (purpose)
- b. *To get a good seat*, you'd like to arrive early. (purpose)
- d. *If everyone is to hear you*, you must speak up. ((*If ...is/are to do ...* can express purpose.)
- e. We ran forward (*in order*) *to welcome the guests*. (purpose)
- f. *In order to accomplish this project*, they worked very hard day and night. (purpose)
- g. The door was wide open *to admit fresh air*. (purpose)
- h. The little boy ran off *so as not to be caught*. (purpose, Hornby 1997)
- i. They stopped *to have a rest*. (purpose)
- j. Ms. Roden was in a great hurry *in order not to be late for the party*.
- k. You must do what the doctor tells you *so as to get* well quickly.
- l. I shall go on working late today *so as to* be free tomorrow. (purpose and result)
- m. I turned down the radio *so as not to disturb you*.
Cf. I turned down the radio *so that* I did not disturb you.
- n. He came early every morning *in order to complete his work before class began*. (purpose)

The infinitive can be used to express purpose or result. In order to avoid ambiguity, *in order to* or *so as to* is used when the infinitive expresses **purpose**. For example, *he came into the room in order to disturb me*. Without using “*in order to*”, the meaning of the sentence is confusing. When we say, “*He came into the room to disturb me*”, the sentence can express either purpose or result.

It is noted that when the infinitive is used to express **purpose**, the whole infinitive clause can be transposed or moved to the initial position (like *b.* and *f.* above) for the purpose of emphasis, although sometimes rather unnaturally:

- o. I caught the train *to go to New York*. (purpose)
To go to New York, I caught the train. (purpose)
- p. I ran *to catch the train*. (purpose)
To catch the train, I ran. (purpose)
- q. *To get a good seat*, you'd like to arrive early. (purpose)
- r. *In order to catch the plane*, we got up early. (purpose)
Cf. We got up early *so that* we could catch the plane. (introduced by a *that*-clause)

So as (to) cannot be placed before the main clause, we do not say,

- p. **So as not to be caught*, the little boy ran off.
- q. **So as to catch the bus*, the man ran as fast as he could.

Moreover, the logical subject of the infinitive is usually the subject of the main clause. *I caught the train to go to New York* in which the logical subject of *to go to New York* is the subject, *I*. In order to avoid ambiguity in meaning, *for + logical subject + to do* construction is used, as in

- r. I stopped *for him to speak to me*. (He spoke to me.)
Cf. I stopped *to speak to him*. (I spoke to him.)
- s. The teacher opened the door *for children to come in*.
- t. Textbooks are made *for students to learn from*.
- u. *For us to start early*, the landlord will have to open the gate at 2:00 am.
- v. *For a machine to run fast*, he adjusted the speed.

In informal English, we use *and* rather than *to* in the cases of *come/go to do* construction, the *and* functions as purpose, too. Also see **E** in **29**.

- w. Go *and get some* water for me. (= Go (*to*) *get some*)
- x. "Come *and see me* when you come back," he said.
- y. Come *dance* with us! (*and* is omitted, especially in AmE.)

When the *go* or *come* is in past tense, the verb after *and* does not express purpose, but expresses result, e.g. *We went and met him at the airport*.

B Result

When the infinitive is used to express result, the infinitive clause is usually placed after the main clause. Besides the infinitive itself, we usually have *so (...) as to...*, *such (...) as to ...*, *enough to ...*, *too ...to...*, and *(only) to* constructions used to express result, as in

- a. I ran all the way *to find that he had gone*. (F.R. Palmer 1978)
- b. Ms. R went abroad *never to return*. (The infinitive expresses result.)
- c. He must be deaf *not to hear that*. (result)
- d. That night there was a storm and I woke *to hear the rain lashing the window panes*.
- e. He lived *to be ninety*. (result)
- f. The miserable old days have gone *never to return*. (result)
- g. She grew up *to be a pretty young lady*. (result)
- i. The peasants worked hard (*so as to live*). (result)
- j. I shall go on working late today *so as to be free tomorrow*. (purpose and result)
- k. Would you be *so kind as to lend* me your pen? (result)
- l. Her unknown illness is *such as to* cause great anxiety.
- m. I was *such* a fool *as to believe* what she told me.
- n. He is old *enough to know* how to handle the issue. (Also see **I** in **5**.)
- o. The wood is strong *enough to carry* the weight.

- p. He is *too* young *to* know anything.
- q. It was *too* late for us *to attend* the meeting. (Also see **I** in 5.)

When we express “an unhappy thing” after the main verb, (*only*) *to do* is used. Again see the following examples:

- r. She woke early (*only*) *to find* it was raining.
- s. She hurried back *only to find* her mother dying in a hospital.
- t. He got to the airport *only to be told* the airplane had taken off.
- u. I ran all the way *to find that she had gone*. (result)
- v. He went home *to find his friend Ms. R waiting for him*. (result)
- w. He went home (*only*) *to find his iPhone stolen*. (result)
- x. The drunken man awoke *to find himself in a ditch*.

Therefore, “*iPhone stolen*” is bad news, and so is *only to find her mother dying in a hospital*, etc. It is noted that in *too...to...* construction, it has negative meaning for the infinitive, e.g. *The rock is too heavy for me to lift*, which means *the rock is very heavy and I am unable to lift it*. This is not always the case. The *too ... to ...* construction can be also used without negating the infinitive, as in

- x. I will be only *too* pleased *to* get home.
(= I will be very pleased to get home.)
- y. It's *too* kind of you *to* have told me that news.
(=You are very kind to have told me that news.)

C Reason/cause

When the infinitive is used to express reason or cause, it looks the same as the expression of purpose. It depends on their implication or meaning from context. For example, *She wept to hear the news* (*to hear the news* expressing reason) and *She wept to obtain sympathy* (*to obtain sympathy* expressing purpose), as in

- a. I am sorry *to have kept you waiting*. (reason)
- b. She was a fool not *to listen to me at that time*. (reason)
Cf. She was a fool because she didn't listen to me at that time.
- c. The girl wept for joy *to hear that her brother was still alive*. (reason)
- d. I rejoiced *to learn that my daughter was admitted into the university*. (reason)
- e. She looked happy *to hear the news*. (reason)
Cf. She looked happy because she heard the news.

Besides, *with/without* + *noun* + *infinitive phrase* can be used to express reason, as in,

- g. *With only five minutes to go*, they were in a great hurry to complete the work.
- h. *With nobody to help the boy*, he finished the work late.
- i. *Without anyone to call her*, she might be late for the performance.

D The infinitive *to* used after some conjunctions (i.e. *as if, as though, etc.*)

The infinitive is used adverbially after *as if, as though, etc.*, to express something true or untrue and may have the meaning of subjunctive mood, as in

- a. She opened her lips *as though to speak*.
- b. He stood up *as if to leave* immediately.

F Condition

Sometimes the infinitive can be used to express condition. In such a case, the infinitive is placed before the main clause, as in

- To hear him speak*, you would think he owned the whole world.
(= If you should hear him speak, you would think he owned the whole world.)

15

The logical subject of the infinitive

The logical subject of the infinitive is usually the subject of the sentence. For example, *I caught the train to go to New York*, in which the logical subject of *to go New York* is *I*, but sometimes the logical subject of the following infinitive is not the subject of the main clause, instead, *for* + *logical subject* + *to do* is used to express purpose to avoid confusion, as in

- a. *For plants to grow properly*, Mr. Marlowe always waters them regularly.
- b. Here's the book *for you to read*.
- c. It was a bad day *for you to call her*.

In order for us to avoid confusion with the uses of the infinitive, *so as* or *in order* is used before the infinitive. Note the differences between the following sentences:

- d. Some people *refuse/hesitate to say* what they think. (SVO)
- e. Some people *hesitate so as (= in order) to choose* the right word. (SVA)

- f. He left us, *so as* (= *in order*) *to* pay the bill. (He paid it) (SVA)
- g. He left us *to pay* the bill. (We had to pay it) (SVOC)

Sometimes it is really hard to distinguish the difference between the purpose and the result, both introduced by an infinitive clause. Again, to avoid ambiguity, we can use *in order to do* or *so as to do* for the expression of purpose.

16

The infinitive used as part of complex object or SVOC

The noun or noun phrase postmodified by the infinitive (or the adjective infinitive) is usually a **logical object** of the infinitive or the receiver of the action. In such a case, the infinitive clause is tantamount to a relative clause.

For example:

- a. We have no time *to lose*.
Cf. We have no time (*that*) *we'll lose*.
- b. I have *something to say*
Cf. I have/There is *something that I need to say*. *Something* is the receiver of the action *to say* or the logical object of the infinitive, *to say*.
- c. I'll get *a book to read* during the vacation.
Cf. I'll get a book *that I can read* during the vacation. (*Book* is the receiver of the action *to read* or the logical object of the infinitive, *to read*.)
- d. Are there *any more letters to mail* today? (... letters *that we'll mail today*?)
(*Letters* is the receiver of the action *to mail* or logical object of the infinitive, *to mail*.)
- e. I'd like/like the paper (*to be*) *copied, please*.
- f. She would prefer/prefers the lights (*to be*) *turned off*
- g. Sandy wanted the carpet (*to be*) *cleaned*.

In the last three sentences above, *to be*, can be omitted when they are used in a passive voice. In such a case, the past participles are still used as complement after the omission of *to be*.

A Using anticipatory *it* to represent the infinitive

In SVOC construction, we use *it* as anticipatory *it* (or empty *it*) to represent the infinitive which is used as the object of the verb, as in

1. We think *it* our duty *to study and work hard for our country*.

- (The infinitive phrase, *to study and work hard for our country*, is the real object of the verb, *think*, and *our duty* is a noun phrase used as the complement. It is **SVOC**.)
2. I count *it* one of the sweetest privileges of my life *to have known and conversed with many men of genius*.
(The perfect infinitive phrase, *to have known and conversed with many men of genius*, is a real object of the verb, *count*, and the noun phrase, *one of the sweetest privileges of my life*, is used as the complement. (It is **SVOC**.)
 3. Do you think *it* proper *to treat her so badly*?
 4. I think *it* prudent *to wait and see*.
 5. We count *it* an honor *to serve you*. (*An honor* is a noun used as complement. It is **SVOC**.)
 6. I should consider *it* unwise *to swop horses in mid-stream*.
 7. Do you consider *it* proper *to treat him so badly*?
 8. She deemed *it* her duty *to help her younger brother*.
 9. I find *it* difficult *to explain the matter to her*.
 10. I'll make *it* my business *to help her*.
 11. I count *it* a great honor *to serve the people* wholeheartedly.
 12. We don't *think fit* to adopt his suggestion.
 13. You know the situation best. Do whatever you *see fit*.
 14. I consider *it* a favor for you *to call on me on that account*.
 15. *It* is considered unwise *to cheat in a test*. (Also see passive in **D** below)

Note that *Think fit* and *see fit* (*to do* something) are fixed phrases, in which the anticipatory *it* is always omitted before *fit* as seen in Sentences 12 and 13 above.

B Infinitive used in some verbs made of a preposition or prepositional phrase

We can use the anticipatory *it* to represent the infinitive used as object in some phrasal verbs made of preposition or prepositional phrase. They are: *take ...in turn, have ...in mind, leave ... to, owe ... to, take ... upon oneself, etc.*, as in

- a. They **took it in turn** *to keep an eye on these disruptive kids*.
(*It* represents *to keep an eye on these disruptive kids*.)
- b. How can you **take it upon yourself** *to say so*?
- c. I **owe it to** you *to explain* that I did that on your account.
- d. I must **leave it to** your own judgment **to decide** whether you'd marry her.

C Infinitive used after some phrase verbs

We treat some phrasal verbs as if they are transitive verbs. We can use an infinitive after them as object. These phrasal verbs are: *arrange for, ask for, beckon to, call on, call upon, care for, count on, depend on, depend upon, long for, motion to, prepare for, provide for, prevail on, rely on, vote for, wait for, wave to, and wish for, etc.*, as in

- a. The president *called on* us *to have background checks when we purchase guns*.
- b. How I *longed for* her *to come back!*
- c. We *were waiting for* them *to come back*.
- d. You cannot *rely on* her *to assist you*.
- e. Shall we *ask for* Mr. Roser *to come, too?*
- f. I *asked for* that *to be done at once*.
- g. I'd *like for* you *to help me*. (AmE)

D Converting the sentence into passive with the subject *it*

We can convert the sentence into passive with the anticipatory *it*, as in

- a. **It** is considered unwise *to swop horses in mid-stream*
Cf. I should consider *it* unwise *to swop horses in mid-stream*.
- b. **It** is made possible *for lost time to be recovered*.
Cf. We make *it* possible for lost time *to be recovered*.)
- c. **It** might be thought reasonable *to start the class at 8:00 a.m.*
Cf. We think *it* reasonable to start the class at 8:00 a.m.)

17

Have and *there + be* constructions

We often use *have* or *there + be* followed by an infinitive, as in

- a. She has *three children to look after*. (*Three children* is the logical object of the infinitive *to look after*.)
- b. He has *cakes to eat*. (*Cake* is also the logical object of the infinitive *to eat*.)
- c. I have *a whole family to support*.
- d. I will have *the house to paint* as I have got a letter from HOA (home of association).
- e. He has *no money to spend*.
- f. There are *three children to take care of*.
- g. There is *no money to spend*.
- h. I want a book *to read*.
- i. I have a lot of things *to do*.

Obviously, *I have cakes to eat* is idiomatic, but *I have cakes to be eaten* is unidiomatic substitution for *I have cakes to eat*. However, *I have cakes to be eaten* usually means *I have some cakes to be eaten by others*, i.e. for others to eat. We sometimes use an active infinitive to talk about **jobs** we have to do as the examples seen above, so we do not use a passive voice. When the subject of the main verb is also the logical object of the infinitive, normally a passive voice is used, but in **there +be** construction, either active or passive is used, as in

- j. These windows have **to be painted**. (*These windows* are the logical object of *paint*.)
- k. There is *a lot of work* **to do/to be done** this weekend.
Cf. There is a lot of work for us to do this weekend.
- l. There are *a lot of windows* **to paint/be painted**.
- m. There is a lot **to be said (or to say)** about this book.

Again, we do not usually use a passive voice in **there + be** construction when it is referred to as **leisure activities**, as in

- n. There are *lots of exciting things* **to do** here. (John Eastwood 2002)

In addition, when the active voice is used in **there + be** construction, it implies *duty*, *necessity*, and the like while the passive implies *possibility* (Schibsbye 1970), as in

- o. There is nothing **to be done** about it. (possibility)
- p. There is only one thing **to be done**. (possibility)
- q. There was no time **to be lost**. (possibility)
- r. There is nothing **to be feared**. (possibility)
- s. Presently she put him down, for there was much **to be done**. (possibility)
- t. There is no time **to lose**. (necessity)
- u. There is only one thing **to do**. (duty)
- v. There is nothing **to fear**. (necessity)

But ***There is a lot of work to be done by that group of people***, in which the passive should be used because of the *by-agent*. Also see **2.** in **10.**

18

Used as object complement

In SVOC construction, the object (O) is the agent of the action and the infinitive is used as complement (C). That is, the object (O) is also the logical subject of the infinitive, as in

I told her **to come**. (*I* is the subject; *told* is the finite verb; *her* is the object and *to come* is the infinitive used as object complement. It is SVOC.)

Verbs used like **tell** above in SVOC construction (some people also called **complex object in SVOC construction**) are: **believe, consider, declare, discover, feel (= think), find (=consider), help, imagine, judge, know, prove, suppose, think, understand**, etc.

More examples:

- a. My wife won't allow our children **to be idle**.
(**To be idle** is the infinitive with *to* and is the complement. It is SVOC.)
- b. Sandy helped me (**to**) **clean the computer**. (*To* is optional after the verb, *help*.)
- c. This book helps me **to see the truth**.
- d. The rag helps me **to clean the table**.
- e. He teaches us **to talk and write in English**.
(**To talk and write in English** is the complement, in which the prepositional phrase *in English* is used as an adverbial. It is SVOCA.)
- f. I don't mean it **to be known**.
(**To be known** is the infinitive with *to* and is the complement. It is SVOC.)
- g. I should prefer them **to come on Sunday**.
(**To come** is the infinitive with *to* and its complement is made up of *to come on Sunday*, in which *on Sunday* is a prepositional phrase used as an adverbial of time. It is SVOCA.)
- h. This led me **to suspect her**. (**To suspect** is the infinitive with *to* and its complement is *to suspect her*, in which *her* is the object of the infinitive *to suspect*. It still belongs to SVOC.)
- i. We consider him **to be a good teacher**.
- j. Ms. R declared herself **to be innocent**.
- k. We found John **to be dishonest**.
- l. They proved the math problem **to be wrong**.
- m. I always thought the boy **to be quiet**.
- n. We know/believe/judge him **to be reliable**.
- o. I should imagine/suppose her **to be sixty**.

In the last seven sentences, the **to be** can be omitted after the verbs of **consider, declare, find, prove, think**, etc. In such a case, after the omission of **to be**, the adjective is still the complement of the object (SVOC). But when the infinitive is perfect, it is usually not permissible for such omission, as in

- p. We considered him **to have been foolish**.

19

A noun or noun phrase postmodified by infinitive

When an infinitive is used to postmodify a noun or a noun phrase, sometimes the infinitive can replace a relative clause (also see **A** in **12**), as in

- a. The person *to ask* is Mr. Marlowe.
Cf. The person (whom) you should ask is Mr. Marlowe.
- b. The way *to handle the case* is to investigate it first.
Cf. The way (in which/that) we should hand the case is to investigate it first.)
- c. The great place *to visit* is Las Vegas.
Cf. The place (that/which) we should/will/are going to visit is Las Vegas.
- d. The time *to leave* is after the principal finishes her speech.
Cf. The time when we should leave is after the principal finishes her speech.
- e. The girl needs someone *to look after her*.
Cf. The girl needs someone who can look after her.)
- f. Mr. Trump is the man *to vote for*.
Cf. Mr. Trump is the man *for whom* we should *vote* or Mr. Trump is the man (that/whom) we should *vote for*.
- g. Ms. R is always the first *to arrive* and the last *to leave* the school.
Cf. Ms. R is always the first *who/that arrives* and *the last who/that leaves* the school.

When a noun or noun phrase postmodified by the infinitive is also the logical object of the infinitive, the passive voice is usually used, as in

- h. He is the only man *to be trusted*. (passive voice)
Cf. He is the only man *who/that can be trusted*
or He is the only man (*whom/that*) *we can trust*.

But active voice is used with the passive meaning, as in

- i. There are several people *to consult* first. (R. A. Close 1977)
- j. Mr. Martin is really a man *to trust*.
- k. There will be a lot of work *to do/to be done* first when school begins.

When the **for-phrase** is added to the infinitive, it becomes the logical subject (usually a person) of the infinitive and it has the meaning of active voice, as in

- m. Ms. R is the only lady *for us to trust*.
- n. There are a lot of people *for us to consult*.

The infinitive used as independent element

The infinitive can be used as independent elements (disjunctive adverbials) of the sentence. They are also called *dangling* or *dangling infinitive phrases* (Randall 1988). Such a dangling infinitive is used to modify the whole sentence (the main statement). The phrase is more or less stereotyped, though with a very few of them. They are enumerated in sentences as follows:

- a. *To speak bluntly*, the newly born baby is covered with fur all over his body.
- b. *To cut a long story short*, I think you are wrong.
- c. *To use a shipping term*, the ship is down by the head.
- d. The baby is rather like an animal, *so to speak*.
- e. He has a lot of children, nine, *to be exact*.
- f. *To be (quite) honest with you*, you should end the bad relationship with her.
- g. *To tell (you) the truth*, they didn't quite like the idea.
- h. *To be sure*, he showed laziness in his work.
- i. *To begin with*, you started the quarrel.
- j. *To tell you the truth*, I don't want to marry you.
- k. *To be fair*, she is a difficult lady to deal with.
- l. *To speak frankly*, you have hurt her feelings.
- m. *Strange to say*, we met in Las Vegas.
- n. *To put it frankly*, you have hurt her feelings.
- o. *To be frank*, you don't make a good progress.
- p. I'm a bit tired of visiting Las Vegas, *to tell you the truth*.

Besides dangling participle, the dangling can occur with the infinitive and the gerund as well. Roughly speaking, the agent of the infinitive should be expressed if it is different for the subject of the sentence but omitted if it is the same. To omit it where it is necessary is inadvertence; to insert it where it is unnecessary will be redundancy (Huang 1979). The following examples show indiscriminate omission leading to dangling construction:

In order to bring her back to normal, she underwent a full course of insulin treatment.
(Say *they let her undergo* or *they subjected her to* instead of *she underwent*, so as to supply the infinitive with the proper agent.)

To cut costs, lamb chops will no longer be trimmed in most butcher shops.
(Say *to cut costs, most butcher shops will no longer trim lamb chops* or *Because most butcher shops must cut costs, they will no longer trim lamb chops*.)

Like the dangling participle, some kind of dangling constructions in the case of the infinitive has been accepted by usage, too. This will be the case where the subject of a sentence is inanimate

and the main verb passive, and no ambiguity, therefore, can be involved by the omission of the personal but indefinite agent of an active infinitive. The dangling is legitimate again, e.g.

The cliff must be scaled *so as to reach* the summit of the mountain.

Cf. The summit of the mountain can only be reached by scaling the cliff.

21

For + noun (or pronoun in objective case) + infinitive

A The preposition *for* is used to introduce a construction in which a noun (or pronoun in objective case) has an infinitive attached to it. The noun or pronoun is the logical subject of the infinitive, e.g.

a. It is very important *for her to quit smoking right now*. (subject)

Cf. *For her to quit smoking right now* is very important.

b. It is impossible *for John/him to do the job alone*. (subject)

Cf. *For John/him to do the job alone* is impossible.)

c. We deem it advisable *for him to go there at once*. (object)

d. I am anxious *for her to have a good rest*. (adverbial)

e. They advertised *for a young girl to look after the children*.

f. I arrange *for a taxi to meet you at the station*.

g. The time has come *for you to do a better job*. (attributive)

Cf. The time *for you to do a better job* has come.

Verbs with *for* and an infinitive include *apply, arrange, ask, call, long, plan, pray, prepare, provide, ring, send, telephone, vote, wait*, etc.

B Care must be taken to distinguish the following from the above-mentioned construction *for + logical subject + to do* :

a. You are very kind *to help me*.

Cf. It is very kind *of you to help me*.

b. Ms. R was careless *to break her iPhone*.

Cf. It was careless *of Ms. R to break her iPhone*.)

c. You are kind *to say so*.

Cf. It's kind *of you to say so*.

We cannot place the prepositional phrase at the beginning of the sentence used as a subject, therefore we do not say, **Of you to help me is very kind*. Here the prepositional phrase *of you* goes rather with *kind* than with the infinitive that follows, though in meaning *you* is still that

logical subject of the infinitive. In such a construction, *adjective of + logical subject*, these adjectives include: *absurd, artful, awful, brave, careless, clever, clumsy, considerate, crazy, cruel, cunning, dishonest, extravagant, foolish, generous, good (= kind), greedy, helpful, honest, horrible, idiotic, impudent, inconsiderate, intelligent, kind, lazy, mean, modest, nasty, nice, polite, reasonable, rude, selfish, sensible, silly, stupid, thoughtful, unselfish, wicked, wise, wrong, etc.*

More examples:

- d. It is *foolish of Mr. Smith to meet her again.*
(Meaning: He is being foolish/acting foolishly by meeting her again.)
- e. It's *generous of you to help me.* (=You are generous to help me.)
- f. It/That was *mean of you not to invite her.* (= You are mean not to invite her.)
- g. It/That was *nice of Sandy to help me.* (= Sandy was nice to help me.)
(*Nice* expressing a personal quality: it was a kind action by Sandy, so to speak.)
- h. How *careless of you to make such a mistake!*
- i. How *dishonest of him not to tell you the truth!*
- j. It was *crazy of you to drink so much.*
- k. Wasn't it *clever of the boys to solve the math problem so quickly!*
- l. It's nice *for you to help.*

When in the exclamatory sentence, *it is* or *it was* can be omitted, e.g. *How foolish of Mr. Smith to meet her again!* (= How foolish of Mr. Smith (*it is*) to meet her again!) We can omit *of +logical subject* in *It was silly to make such a mistake.* (cf. *It was silly of you to make such a mistake.*) In this construction, the adjectives are used to express personal qualities as shown above, but when we say *It was nice for Sandy to take the dog for a walk*, it was a pleasant experience for Sandy. Sometimes *that* is used besides *it* in such a construction as seen from *g* and *h* above.

Infinitive without *to* or bare infinitive

22

After all auxiliary and modal verbs except *ought*

We shall/will/may/can come tomorrow.

*We shall/will/may/can *to* come tomorrow.

He *ought to* have told me about that.

23

After the object of the verbs expressing physical perception/sensation (*see, hear, feel, observe, notice, watch, listen to, look at, etc.*)

For example:

- a. I *feel* my heart **beat** fast.
But I *felt* it **to be** true. (Note: **to** is used after the verb **be** in such a case.)
- b. I *saw* her **sneak** into that house. (But: She was seen **to sneak** into that house.)
- c. I *heard* her **open** the door. Cf. She was heard **to open** the door.
- d. Did you *notice* anyone **come**?
- e. They *watched* the lion **pass by**?
- f. Our principal *observed* me **teach** the students with special needs yesterday.
- g. He was seen **to get** in the house.
Cf. We saw him **get** in the house.

When the object of the sentence above becomes passive, the infinitive sign **to** is usually used, e.g. *He was seen **to get** in the house.*

24

After the object of the causative verbs (*let, make, have, etc.*)

The non-finite form of the object complement to the verb **have** is rather complicated. They are demonstrated below:

A When **shall / will have** means **want, wish** or **like**, or they are in negation, a bare infinitive is usually used, as in :

- a. I shall **have** you **know** that.
- b. I won't **have** you **do** that.
- c. I won't **have** you **say** such things.

B When **have** means **get** or **make**, which is usually American usage, we take a bare infinitive:

- a. Please **have** the boy **clean** out the room.
- b. I'd like to **have** the room **look** clean and tidy.
- c. He *had* them **beat** the carpet.

d. Don't forget to **have** her **come**.

C **Have** meaning *wish, arrange, experience* or *cause* takes either a bare infinitive or a present participle according to implication:

- a. I had a very strange thing **happen** to me yesterday. (bare infinitive)
- b. The doctor had the man **change** his diet.
- c. What would you have me **do**?
- d. I had a happy thing **happen** to me last week.
- e. We like to have our friends **visit** Las Vegas next week.
- f. You should have someone **check** these figures.
- g. He had her **die**. (Ge 1962)
- h. We shall soon have the mist **rising**. (It has the progressive meaning.)
- i. In a few minutes he had us all **laughing** again. (It has the progressive meaning.)

D **Let, make**

- a. Let me **try**, please.
Cf: I will *get* him *to do* it.
- b. Don't *let there be* any noise.
- c. *Let there be* no mistake about this.
- d. Let me **do it, please**.
- e. He *was let (to) do it*. (*To* is optional here, but it'd better to keep it in passive voice.)
- f. She made him **suffer** a lot.
- g. He *made* me **say** that.
- h. I *was made to say* that. (*To* is used when it is in passive voice.)
- i. She had to **make do** with one maid.
- j. I think I can **make do** with five students.
- k. He **made believe** that he was rich.
- l. They **made believe** to be generous, but they never gave us money.
- m. They **made believe** that they were making progress in the project.

25

Bid, dare, know, etc.

- a. The knight bade the traveler **enter**. (**Bid** occurs in old-fashioned narrative English.)
- b. He *bade* me (to) **come in**.
- c. Does anyone *dare (to) call* me a liar?
- d. Would anyone **dare predict** when this dictatorship will end?
- e. You'll never **find** him (to) **neglect** his work. (Schibsbye 1970)

(*To* is optional in negative, but when the verb *be* is used, *to be* should be kept: **I found her *to be* dishonest** or *I found her dishonest.*)

As is known to all, *dare* is both an auxiliary verb and a lexical (or regular) verb. When *dare* is used as a lexical verb, the infinitive sign, *to*, is either used or not used. Generally speaking, the omission of *to* happens when *dare* is used in either a question (frequently used after *how*) or a negative sentence or sentence with negative meaning, as in

- f. Does anyone *dare (to) call* me a liar? (question)
- g. How *dare* you *speak* to me so rudely? (how)
- h. We *have/had never known* him *lose* his temper before. (negation)
- i. *Have* you *ever known* him *not come*? (question)
- j. I *have never known* her *sing* so beautifully before. (negation)
- k. Would anyone *dare predict* when this dictatorship will end? (question)
- l. I *never dared (to) ask* him. (negation)
- m. He *did not dare approach* her first. (negation)
- n. No one *dare question/disobey* of this savage dictator. (negation)
- o. Cassia *did not dare ask* the Englishwoman where she was from, for fear of anger or punishment. (negation)

Note that *know* is usually followed by a bare infinitive when it is perfect tense or in negation or in a question, but when the infinitive *to be* is used, we retain *to be* after the verb *know*, or *to do* is retained when *know* is converted into passive, as in

- p. I never knew him *to be* too busy to study.
- q. I have never known him *to be* too busy to study.
- r. I have known experts *make* this mistake.
- s. He *has never been known to behave* like that before. (*To* is retained in pass voice.)
- t. *I've never known* him *behave* like this.
- u. *I've never known* her *to lose* her temper. (Typical BrE) - Hornby 1976
- v. She *had never known* a patient *to receive* so many flowers.
- w. I have never known her *to have failed*. (perfect tense)
- x. I've never known *him (to) run* faster than that.
(The *to* is optional and thus usually found in BrE.)
- y. He *has been known to make* mistakes on occasion. (*To* is used in passive)
- z. Experts *have been known to make* this mistake. (*To* is used in passive)

26

In some idiomatic expressions

The bare infinitive is also used in: **had better** ('d better or better), **had best** ('d best), **would** (or **had**) **rather**, etc.

Had better ('d better or better), had best ('d best)

1. We'd better **try** again. (It means I think we should.)
2. She'd better **be met by him**.
3. You'd better **have finished** the job by tomorrow.
4. We'd better **not stop**.
5. You **had better do** the homework by yourself.
6. You'd best **try** again.
7. I **hadn't better go**. (F.R.Palmer 1978)
8. We'd better **be going**.
9. I'd better **go** and so **had** you.
10. **Had** I better **stay** at home? (Rarely used in a question)
11. We'd better **go**, hadn't we?
12. **Hadn't** you better **take** an umbrella?
13. **Better try** again (= You'd better try again).
14. You **had better/You'd better do** the assignment by yourself.
15. You'd best try again. (This is now rather old-fashioned.)
16. **Better be alone** than in bad company.

Cf. **Better to die** (= It is better to die) standing than **to live** on one's knees.

Note that **had better** can be followed by progressive infinitive, but cannot be negated; the negation of which occurs in the infinitive and **had better** indicates the speaker or hearer (showing strong recommendation) regards as desirable, as in

17. We'd better **be going**.
18. We'd better **not go**. (*We'd not better go.)

27

Would (or had) rather, would sooner, rather than

It is noted that in terms of discourse and subject orientation, **would rather** indicates the subject orientation, as in

- a. I **would rather go** now.
- b. I **would much rather not go**.
- c. I **would sooner die than** consent to such a plan.
- d. I'd rather **not stop** yet.

- e. I'd rather **be lying** on the beach than stuck in a traffic jam.
- f. I'd rather **not** go.
- g. I'd rather **not** sit at the back.
- h. I'd rather (= sooner) **go** now. (It means "I'd prefer to go now.")
- i. Would you rather/sooner **stay** here? (Rarely used in a question.)
- j. I had rather **die** than betray her.

As seen above, sometimes perfect or progressive forms are used in these constructions. The omission of the infinitive sign, *to*, also happens in *rather than* when it means *would rather not*, as in

- k. I decided to write *rather than telephone*.
- l. He resigned *rather than take part in such a dishonest transaction*.
- m. *Rather than travel by air*, I'd prefer a week on a big liner.
- n. He suffered death *rather than betray the secret*. (F.T. Wood 1993)
- o. *Rather than allow the vegetables to go bad*, he sold them at half price.

28

May (just) as well, might (just) as well

May (just) as well (spoken) is used to say that you will do something that you do not really want to do, because you cannot think of anything better. *Might (just) as well* (usually spoken) is used to suggest doing something that you do not really want to do, because you have no better idea. For example:

A: How shall we go? Shall we walk or go by bus?

B: We *may/might (just) as well walk*. That's what I suggest.

A: Isn't the traffic slow today?

B: Yes, we *might (just) as well walk/have walked*. It would be just as quick.

A: I agree. We *might (just) as well not take/have taken a bus at all*. It's so slow.

His appearance changed so much that you *may well not recognize him*. (NOT *may not*)

We *might (just) as well not have a car at all*.

I *may as well go out tonight*. There's nothing on television.

If you're not going to eat that pizza, I *may as well throw it out*.

It's no good waiting for the bus. We *might as well walk*.

No one will eat this food; it *might just as well be thrown away*.

Note that *may/might as well* cannot be used in a question or *may* or *might* cannot be negated (**may/might not as well*), but we use *not* to negate the following verb. However, a question or

negation can be used in *It might be (just) as well to* construction; in such a case, the infinitive with *to* is usually used as follows:

Might it be (just) as well ***to send*** a text message?

Might it (not) be (just) as well ***to send*** a telegram? (R. A. Close 1975)

29

The omission of the infinitive sign, *to*

R. Quirk, et al (1972) pointed out “The *to* of the infinitive is optionally omitted in a clause which, as complement, expands the meaning of the verb DO.” When we do not use the infinitive sign, *to*, we call it *bare infinitive* or *infinitive without to*. They mean the same. A bare infinitive occurs because the subject of each sentence contains the verb DO in the noun clause (Gu 1984). We are going to describe the detail of the omission of the infinitive sign, *to*, in various constructions below:

A In *all + subject + do ... construction*

The *all+ subject + do* construction is used to introduce a noun clause. In such a case the infinitive sign, *to*, is usually omitted in its complement, as in

1. *All I did* was (to) ***turn off*** the gas. (*All I did* is a noun clause used as subject of the sentence.)
2. *All you do* is ***talk about*** cars. (*To* is omitted between *is* and *talk* in the sentence.)
3. *All she seems to do* is ***gossip*** with her friend.
(*To* is omitted between *is* and *gossip* in the sentence.)
4. *All we have to do* is ***push*** the button. (*To* is omitted between *is* and *push* in the sentence.)
5. *All I could do* was ***beat*** the thug black and blue.
(*To* is omitted between *was* and *beat* in the sentence.)
6. For now, *all he could do* was ***be patient*** and ***wait***.
(*To* is omitted between *was* and *be* in the sentence.)
7. *All he has to do* was ***bathe*** and ***dress***, then ***take*** the two-hour wagon to the MacGregor plantation, where the wedding was due to start at once. --- *Roots*, p.728

B In *the... thing(s)+ subject + do... Construction*

In *the ... thing(s)+ subject + do ... construction*, we usually have *first, only, etc.*, used to premodify *thing* or *things* as in

The first thing we had *to do* was *ask* him for help.

(*To* is omitted between *was* and *ask* in the sentence, *thing* being modified by *the first*.)

If you ever went to the United States to study in a college or a university, **one of the first things** you would have *to do* is *open* a checking account.

---- *English for Today*, Book 3, p.225

(*To* is omitted between *is* and *open* in the sentence.)

The only thing I can *do* now is *go on* by myself.

(*To* is omitted between *is* and *go* in the sentence.)

The only thing she can *do* now is *divorce* him.

(*To* is omitted between *is* and *divorce* in the sentence.)

C In *what + subject + do ... construction*

In *what + subject + do* construction, the **what** is tantamount to the meaning of **that which** or **the thing(s) which/that**, as in

What I really wanted to do was *drive* all night.

(*To* is omitted between *was* and *drive* in the sentence.)

What the plan does is (*to*) *ensure* a fair pension for all. (*To* is optional.)

What a fire-door does is (*to*) *delay* the spread of a fire long enough for people to get out. (*To* is optional.)

What he'll do is *spoil* the whole thing.

What he does is *teach*.

What John did to his suit was (*to*) *ruin* it. (*To* is optional.)

What I really wanted to do was *drive* all day.

It is noted that a past participle can be used when the perfect tense is used in the subject or a gerund can be used when a progressive tense is used in the subject, as in

What he has done is *spoilt* the whole thing. (*Spoilt* is used because of *has done*.)

What he is doing is *spoiling* the whole thing. (*Spoiling*, a gerund, is used because of the progressive tense, *is doing*.)

D In *the best (most, least, etc.) ... to do construction*

The infinitive sign, *to*, can be also omitted in **the best (most, least, etc.) ... to do** construction, where *the best* means *the thing(s) that is (are) best, the most, the greatest amount* or *the most possible thing(s)*, and *the least, the least possible thing(s)*, as in

The least I can do is ***drive*** everybody else closer to the issue.

The best way to do was ***wait*** until Richie was not entangled in a court action.

The best she could do was ***remain*** silent.

As long as you have air, ***the best thing to do*** is ***stay*** on the bottom and ***find*** shelter in the reef.

The worst you can do is ***become*** very drowsy.

In the examples from **A** to **D** above, we notice that the subject of each sentence must contain the verb *do* form, which can be either finite or non-finite. The linking verb is usually *be* (*is* used in the present time or future time and *was* used in the past time) in the sentence.

More examples:

What he'll do is ***spoil*** the whole thing. (future time in the noun clause)

What he's done is ***spoil*** the whole thing. (present perfect in the noun clause)

All he did was ***talk to*** her patiently. (past time in the noun clause)

All you do is ***think of*** him. (present time in the noun clause)

What he's doing is ***spoiling*** the whole thing. (progressive tense in the noun clause, but *spoiling* is a gerund.)

All we are trying to do is ***find*** the fact. (*to do*, non-finite form)

The best thing she could do was ***remain*** silent. (used with an auxiliary verb)

All I could do when we got on the ground was ***hug*** and ***kiss*** the man.

---- *Reader's Digest*, Oct. 1974, p.20

(*When we got on the ground*, the adverbial clause of time, is inserted between *could do* and *was* in the above sentence.)

The only thing I can do now is ***go on*** by myself. (*Now* is inserted between *do* and *is*.)

In the last two sentences, something is inserted between the verb *be* and the infinitive. It does not affect the omission of the infinitive sign, *to*, in such cases. Moreover, when the subject complement is placed before the subject of the sentence for the purpose of emphasis, the infinitive sign, *to*, is still omitted, as in

Die is the last thing I shall ***do***, doctor. Cf. The last thing I shall do is (to) die, doctor.

Turn off the tap was all I ***did***. Cf. All I did was (to) turn off the tap.) (Quirk, et al 1972)

E Come or go

Usually when *come* or *go* used in imperative sentences (but not limited) or indicative sentences or interrogative questions (also see **A** in **14**), bare infinitives are often used (Gu 1984).

For example:

I'll **come ask** her about it.
 I'll **go tell** her.
Come live with me and be my honey. (Imperative)
 "Go **take a look** in the closet," he told Leuci.
 ---- *Reader's Digest*, August 1979, p.202
 Let's **go find** us a drink.
 Let's **go find** something to eat.
 I think I'll **go lie** down for a while.
 I had to call my folks to come **get** me.
 He decided to **go borrow** it.
 She finally had to **go ask** for a raise.
 You'd better **go see** a doctor about that cut.
 I'd like to **go hear** a concert this afternoon.
 Will you **come join** us?
 Do you want to **go look** at yourself?
Do come to my house this evening!

In the last sentence above, DO is used for the emphasis of the action COME in the imperative sentence, which has nothing to do with the omission of *to* between **do** and **come**. In the above sentences except the last one, the infinitive sign *to* is omitted, but attention should be paid to the fact that when *come* or *go* in past form, the *to* is usually not omitted, so we usually do not say: **I went tell her*, **He came watch the movie last night*, but instead, we say *I went to tell her* and *He came to watch the movie last night*. We can also use *and* in *He came and watched the movie last night*. This sentence is correct. But in this sentence, *and watched the movie last night*, expresses result. Also see **A Purpose** in 14. Sometimes the infinitive *to* is still omitted even if an adverb is used after *come* or *go* (Gu1984), e.g.

Rosasharm, you **go over talk** to Miss Wainwright.
Come on get a beer.
 Can I **come in watch** Mrs. Morrison nurse her kid?

The omission of the infinitive *to* also happens in the sentences where an adverb is inserted as we see the last three sentences above (*over* is inserted between *go* and *talk*, *on* between *come* and *get*, and *in* between *come* and *watch*).

The omission is often seen in advertisements (especially in AmE) for the sake of brevity or in order to catch people's attention, as in

Come **fly** Korea. Come *spend* a few pleasant hours as our guests.
 ---- *Time*, April 14, 1980, p.3

There will be pageants, parades, festivals, even royal tours. Come *celebrate* with us.
---- *Newsweek*, April 21, 1980, p.13

F Help

Sandy helped *me (to) clean the room*. (*To* is optional after the verb, *help*.)

This book helps me *to see the truth*.

The rag helps me *to clean the table*.

It is noted that in the sentences above: “Sandy helped me *(to) clean the room*”, where *to* is either used or omitted after *help*, but especially in American English, *to*, is usually not used in such a case. We keep the infinitive sign *to* in the last two sentences, because the subject of the sentence does not directly participate in the following action – *the book* does not see the truth – and neither does *the rag* - do the cleaning, while *Sandy* does part of her work – *cleaning the room*, so *to* is not used. In a word, when *help* is used as a main verb and the subject of the sentence does not do the work or part of the work in the infinitive, *to* is usually retained. In informal English, the infinitive sign, *to*, is often omitted after *help*. However, when *to* is not used in such a case, it does not affect the meaning of the sentence. When it is converted into passive, the *to* is usually used, as in

He *helped* me *(to) carry* the box upstairs.

I *was helped to carry* the box upstairs.

We *were helped to get out*.

In addition, we keep *to* when the object of *help* is long, as in

Can I help (you) carry that?

Can I help *(to)* carry it for you?

Help the little boys at the back of the hall *to* carry the chairs out.

(*To* is used because of the long object, *the little boys at the back of the hall*.)

In the United States the verb *help* may be followed by the simple form (infinitive without *to*) ... while in Great Britain, the *to* infinitive is required (Evens, et al 1957).

30

Bare infinitives used after some prepositions

A bare infinitive (also see 11) may occasionally be used after the prepositions *except, but, than, rather than, about, besides, save*, etc., as in

The child **did** nothing **except weep**.

Cf. He seldom comes **except to look** at my pictures.

(**To** is used because there is no Do form in it as described in **A** through **D** in **29**.)

She will **do** anything for you **except lend** your money.

Cf. It had no effect **except to make** him angry.

She **did** nothing **except complain** the whole time she was here.

What could I **do** then **except watch** them carry you away?

Sandy can **do** everything **except cook**.

They could **do** nothing **but wait** for the doctor to arrive.

She can **do** anything **but sing**.

He **did** nothing **but laugh**.

They couldn't **do** anything **but just sit there and hope**.

From the above examples, we see a bare infinitive used after the prepositions *except*, *but*, and *than*, because in the predicate contains the verb DO. Without the use of DO, we usually keep the infinitive sign, *to*, as in “He seldom comes *except to look* at my pictures.” “It had no effect *except to make* him angry.” “He desired nothing *but to succeed*”, etc. When **do nothing else** construction is used, we do not use *but* or *except*; instead, we use *than* instead (Gu 1984), as in

She **did** nothing **else than laugh**.

= She **did** nothing **but laugh**.

She **did** nothing **else than weep**.

= She **did** nothing **except weep**.

Besides what has been described above, the omission of the infinitive sign *to* also happens after the prepositions *save*, *besides*, etc., when the verb DO (finite or non-finite) appears, as in

What **had** she **done** for her father **save leave** him at the first opportunity?

I hardly remember what I **did besides read**.

That afternoon I had nothing **to do besides answer letters**.

What **has** he **done besides read** the paper?

31

Bare infinitives used in some fix phrases or idioms

The omission of the infinitive sign, *to*, happens in some fix phrases, e.g. *go hang*, *go fetch* (*a dog*), *make believe*, *make do*, *hear say*, *hear tell*, *let drop*, *let fall*, *let go*, *let slip*, *let drive*, *let fly*, etc., as in

We'll have to **make do** with dry bread.

He *made believe* he was innocent.
Don't *let slip* such a good opportunity to learn.
He *let go* (of) the rope.
Make that dog *leave go* of my coat.
I've *heard tell* of such happenings.
I *hear say* that there will be an earthquake soon.
We can't let things *go hang*.
I *dare say* he'll come later.
He *let fly* a torrent of abuse at me.
He drew his sword and *let drive* at me.
It is *do or die*. (bare infinitive)

In elliptical questions beginning with *wh*-words: *how*, *why*, *why not*, *etc.*

32

How + come + (that-clause)

How come is used to ask why something has happened or been said, especially when you are surprised by it, as in

How come you didn't tell me about this before?
(NOT *How to come ...?* or *How comes ...?*)
(= How can it be that/why is it that you didn't tell me about this before?)
How come they left you alone here?
(=How can it be that/why is it that they left you alone here?)
How come I never see her anymore?
How come Dave's home? Isn't he feeling well?

33

Why (not) + bare infinitive

Why + bare infinitive is used to introduce questions usually to suggest that it is stupid or pointless to do something while *why not + bare infinitive* introduces suggestions and advice, as in

Why worry? (Cf. "Why do you worry?" or "Why did you worry?")
Why worry about such trifling matters?

Why **risk** breaking the law?
Why **pay** more at other shops?
Why **not consult** your supervisor? (NOT Why not to consult ...?)
You're putting on weight. Why **not have your tea** without sugar?
It's cold outside. Why **not close** the window?
Why **not take a break/a holiday**?
Why **not make** your dress, instead of buying it?

Remember a past adverbial cannot be used with this construction; therefore, we do not say:

*Why **not clean** the room *yesterday*?

But when a past adverbial is used, we will change the structure and we can say:

Why **didn't you clean** the room *yesterday*?

34

The split infinitive

An adverb is sometimes placed between the infinitive and its sign **to**. This construction is known as **the split infinitive**, e.g.

The delay is bound to **seriously** hamper the progress of rebuilding the city.

The adverb **seriously** is inserted between the infinitive sign **to** and the infinitive verb, **hamper**. Split infinitive constructions are quite common in English, especially in informal English. The split infinitive should have been avoided here. Some people think the use of a split infinitive incorrect. But sometimes, when the avoidance of a split infinitive involves "real ambiguity" or "patent artificiality," as Fowler put it, we should not hesitate to use one (Huang 1979). Split infinitives are common usage when we want the adverb to modify it, as in

Our object is to **further** cement trade relation.
He likes to **half** close his eyes.
I don't expect to **ever** see her again.
To **almost** succeed is not enough.
He was too ill to **really** carry out his duty.
I wish to **utterly** forget my past.
He began to **slowly** get up off the floor.
It's a sad experience to **always** live from hand to mouth.
I don't expect you to **suddenly** change your mind.

However, certain adverbs such as *only*, *merely*, *not*, cannot be placed between although we see some people still use them. We usually do not say “I decided to *not* go there alone.” Instead, we say “I decided *not* to go there alone.”

35

The omission of the infinitive after the main verb

A We can leave an infinitive, but keep the infinitive sign *to*, in order to avoid its **repetition**, as in

I have to leave, but I don't want *to*.

(= I have to leave, but I don't want to *leave*. *Leave* is omitted after the main verb, *want*)

Would you please come to join us for lunch? Yes, I'd like/love *to*.)

We should like our daughter to be enrolled in a magnet program, but we don't really expect her *to*.

Why didn't you come last night? You were told *to*.

She opened the window, though I had told her not *to*.

You have turned off the computer in the lab. I told you *not to*, didn't I?

Ms. R got fired, but she didn't expect *to*.

She works harder now than she used *to* (work hard).

He was riding his bicycle in the park, but I told him not *to* (ride his bicycle in the park).

(**Note:** The verb phrase in the preceding clause or sentence may not contain the infinitive phrase as seen above.)

A: Would you like to see our baby?

B: I'd love *to*. (= I'd love to see your baby.)

A: Can baby walk yet?

B: No. he can't. He's not able *to*.

A: Does Mr. R live here?

B: No, but he used *to*.

A: Have you finished the work yet?

B: No, but I'm going *to*.

A: Why does she get up early every day?

B: Because she has *to*.

A: May I go out this evening?

B: Yes, I allow you (**to**).

A: Ought she to start now?

B: Yes, she ought (**to**)

Note that we usually omit **to** after the verb **like**, but not **would like** (as seen below), e.g.

Come here if you like.

Come here if you'd like **to**.

But when the finite verb has an auxiliary verb or perfect tense, we usually repeat them after the infinitive sign **to**, e.g.

Ms. R *was fired*, but she didn't expect **to be**. (*Was* is an auxiliary verb in main clause, *was fired*.)

I *haven't finished* as much work today as I'd like **to have**.

(*Have* is an auxiliary verb in the main clause *haven't finished*.)

B When **and** is used to link the previous verb, we do not usually use the infinitive sign **to**, e.g.

I will come **and** let you know how to do it. (= I will come *to* let)

I'll come to get you **and** drive you to Las Vegas.

I learnt to read **and** write at the age of six.

However, **to** is sometimes used after **and** or **or** because of emphasis shown in comparison with or contrast with, the two or more coordination, as in

It is necessary for us *to read more and to have more practice*.

Mr. Roden asked you *to call you or to send text message*.

To be or not to be, that is the question.

Upon hearing the news, I really did not know whether *to laugh or to cry*.

Please go to the seaside *to swim, to get suntanned*.

He likes to stay with his parents, *to work in the fields with them*.

(*To get suntanned* and *to work in the fields with them* in the above sentences are used to express purpose, and a comma is necessary here.)

So far as the parallel construction is concerned, we keep **to** in the construction ... **better ... than...**, as in

It was better *to laugh* than *to cry*.

Better *to die* standing than *to live* on one's knees.

36

The absolute construction

Besides infinitives used independent elements, which are looked upon as legitimate dangling infinitives, the absolute construction of an infinitive, comparable with that of the participle, is also in existence, e.g.

Books borrowed must be returned when due, *the defaulter to pay a fine of 5 cents per book per day*.

Mrs. Roden went to Poland yesterday, *her husband to join her next week*.

Also see **C in 14**, the use of *with + noun + infinitive phrase*.

That is the end of the illustration of the use of *the infinitive*, one of the three non-finite forms - *the infinitive*, *the participles* (which have two forms, *the present participle* and *the past participle*), and *the gerund*. *The infinitive* also has two types of infinitives: *the infinitive with to* (to-infinitive) and the *infinitive without to* (bare infinitive). English learners whose native language is not English always find it difficult how to use the infinitive correctly. By amplifying them with various kinds of attributives and/or adverbials, A.S. Hornby expanded them into his 25 sentence constructions in *Guide to Constructions and Usage in English*, Oxford University Press (Oxford London, 1976). Moreover, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Great Britain: The Pitman Press, 1978) is also a good English dictionary for English learners because it tells us how to use each word correctly in English. At the end of the dictionary there is a table of codes to describe the constructions of each verb. The authors of the dictionary used simple and basic English words to define, describe, and illustrate each word in the dictionary so that English learners can easily read and understand each definition and description. In the future the writer will illustrate the other two non-finite forms - *the participles* (which have two forms, *the present participle* and *the past participle*), and *the gerund*. Any comment or critique is welcome of the article.

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