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Grammar Reference

Grammar Reference: Gerund/Infinitive Constructions and Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal Verbs

A phrasal verb is a verb and a particle such as: *down*, *into*, *out*, or *up*. Although a phrasal verb has two parts (verb + a particle), the two parts function together as one. The meaning of a phrasal verb is usually different from the meaning of each of its parts individually.

Some phrasal verbs are **separable** and can take objects *before* or *after* the particle. If the object is a pronoun, it always appears *before* the particle.

Example: A friend is someone who **brings out** the best in you.

A friend is someone who **brings** the best **out** in you.

A friend is someone who **cheers** you **up** when you're feeling down.

~~A friend is someone who **cheers up** you when you're feeling down.~~

Some phrasal verbs are **inseparable** and the object cannot go between the verb and the particle.

Example: Good friends are always happy to help when you **run into** a problem.

~~Good friends are always happy to help when you **run** a problem **into**.~~

Be mindful of the friends that you **hang around**.

Phrasal verbs that don't take an object are known as **intransitive** phrasal verbs.

Example: True friends don't **drift apart**.

It's safe to **open up** with close friends.

Three-word phrasal verbs have a particle *and* a preposition.

Example: Make new friends, but **hang on to** the old ones.

A true friend will always **stand up for** you.

Gerunds vs. Infinitive Construction

A gerund is a verb that is used as a noun.

Example: **Cooking** is one of my favorite weekend activities.

The hardest part about studying is **starting**.

An infinitive is when a base form of a verb is preceded by “to” (to + base form).

Example: I am hoping **to start** Chinese classes soon.

He has been happy **to help**.

These verbs are commonly **followed by gerunds**: *appreciate, enjoy, give up, keep, put off, suggest*.

Example: I **suggest starting** to go on individual dates after you have first gained some experience in group dating.

He always **appreciates sharing** what we are thankful for.

They have **put off seeing each other** for three consecutive weeks.

The verbs are commonly **followed by an infinitive**: *ask, decide, expect, intend, need, refuse, seem, tend*.

Example: We **decided to go** our separate ways.

I never **expected to meet** the love of my life.

They would never **intend to betray** one another.

These verbs can be **followed by either a gerund or an infinitive**: *begin, bother, continue, hate, prefer, start, consider*. For most verbs, the meaning stays the same regardless, but for 5 special verbs, the meaning will change depending on whether a gerund or infinitive is used: *try, stop, forget, remember, regret*.

Example: Last month, I **started taking** cooking classes.

Last month, I **started to take** a cooking class.

I **tried to read**, but couldn't focus today. (tried, but lacked ability, will do again in future)

I **tried reading** in Spanish, but quit when I got to Don Quixote. (tried, but stopped forever)

He **stopped eating** sugar. (He quit eating sugar forever)

He **stopped to eat** lok lak. (He took a break from what he was doing to eat lok lak)