



1. Grammar

1.1. Verb + ing

1.2. Verb + to

1.3. Verb + object + to

1.4. Verb + ing or to

1.5. Prefer and would rather

1.6. Preposition + ing

2. Focus on Vocabulary: Idioms and Metaphors

2.1. Idioms and fixed expressions

2.1.1. As...as.../ like...

2.1.2. Binomials.

3. Communicative skills (Listening and speaking): Everyday expression.

4. Writing: Joining sentences.

4.1. Introduction and conclusion.

4.2. Expressing advantages and disadvantages.



1. Grammar

1.1. Verb + ing

▶ Look at these examples:

- I enjoy reading English literature. (not “ I enjoy to dance”)
- Would you mind closing the window? (not “ mind to close”)
- Paul suggested going to the theatre. (not “suggested to go”)
- After **enjoy**, **mind** and **suggest**, we use –ing (not to...).

▶ Here are some more verbs that are followed by –ing:

Stop, delay, fancy, consider, admit, miss, involve, finish, postpone, imagine, avoid, deny, risk, practise.

Examples

- My best friend has **stopped smoking**.
- They have **finished preparing** everything for the event.
- I couldn't **avoid telling** her about the good news.
- He doesn't **fancy going** out tonight to Sarah's birthday.
- They have **considered studying** abroad for one academic year.

▶ Note the negative form **not –ing**:

When I am on holiday, I **enjoy not having** to drive at rush hour.

We also use **–ing** after:

- **give up**: (stop)
- **put off**: (postpone)
- **carry on/ go on**: (continue)
- **keep or keep on**: (do something continuously or repeatedly)

▶ Examples

- They have **given up presenting** him for President
- She must do something. She can't **go on living** like this.
- Please **keep waiting** for a while until the doctor finishes with Susan.

When you are talking about finished actions, you can say *having done/stolen/said*:

- You **admitted having stolen** the money.

But it is not necessary to use having (done). You can also use the simple -ing form for finished actions:

Ex: He now **regrets saying** what he said.

After some of the verbs on this page (especially admit/deny/ suggest) you can use that:

Ex: She **denied that** she had stolen the money. (or She denied **stealing**...).

1.2. Verb+ to...

Here are some examples of verbs followed by **to + infinitive** when they are combined with any other different verb:

Offer, decide, hope, deserve, attempt, promise, agree, plan, aim, afford, manage, threaten, refuse, arrange, learn, forget, fall

▶ Examples

It was her anniversary, so we **decided to** buy something special.

Finally, I **agreed to** share my office with the assistant professor.

My sister **learnt to** play the guitar when she was 8 years old.

After a while moving my hand, I failed to call her attention.

▶ Note these examples with the negative **not to**...:

She decided **not to go** for a walk because of the weather.

I **promised not to be** late.



▶ We also use **to** after: **Seem, appear, tend, pretend, and claim.**

- I think she **tends to waste** her time.
- They **pretended not to be** informed about the news.

▶ There is also a continuous infinitive (to be doing) and a perfect infinitive (to have done).

- I **pretended to be waiting** for someone.
- You **seem to have lost** weight.

▶ In some cases, we can also use the noun instead of the verb and get the following combination:

- George **tends to talk too much** or Georges **has a tendency to** talk too much.
- He has **decided to give up smoking** or **His decision to give up smoking** is clever.

▶ There is one peculiar case after the verb dare. You can use the infinitive with or without to:

I wouldn't **dare to** call him or I wouldn't **dare** call him.

▶ But after **daren't**, you must use the infinitive without to:

We **daren't phone** him after the accident.

▶ After the following verbs you can use a question word (what/ whether/ how etc) + to...:

Ask, decide, know, remember, forget, explain, learn, understand, wonder, show, tell, advice, teach,...etc



Ex: Remind me to call you later. Jane warned me not to touch the broken window.



▶ Note that you cannot use suggest with the structure **verb + object + to**:

Ex: He suggested that I should buy a new house (not “ Jane suggested me to buy”).

▶ After the verbs advise, recommend, encourage, allow, permit, forbid, there are two possible structures:

Verb + ing (without an object)	verb + object + to
Ex: I would recommend staying....	Ex: I wouldn't recommend anybody to stay

▶ Finally, make and let have the structure verb+ object + infinitive (without to):

- **Ex:** Hot water makes me feel fine.
- **Ex:** Let me carry your bag.

▶ We say “make somebody do...” (not “to do”), but the passive is (be) made to do...” (infinitive with to).

Ex: Peter was made to bring his identity card to the Police station.

1.4. Verb + ing or to

Some verbs can be followed by –ing or to ... with a difference of meaning.

REMEMBER

I remember doing something = I did it and now I remember this.

You remember doing things after you have done it:

I'm sure I locked the door. I remember locking it. (I locked it and now I remember this).

I remember to do something = I remember that I had to do it, and so I did it. You remember to do something before you do it:

I remembered to lock the door when I left but I forgot to shut the windows. (I remembered that I had to lock the door and so I locked it).

REGRET

I regret doing something = I did it and now I'm sorry about it.

I now regret saying what I said.

I regret to say/ to tell you/ to inform you = I'm sorry that I have to say (etc.):

We regret to inform you that we are unable to offer you the job.

GO ON

Go on doing something = continue doing the same thing.

The politician went on reading with the discourse for two hours.

Go on to do something = do or say something new:

After discussing the economy, the minister then went on to talk about internal matters.



The verbs begin, start, intend, continue, bother can be followed by –ing or to ... with little or no difference in meaning. So you can say:

Ex: It has started raining or It has started to rain.

There are more examples of verbs that change their meaning when followed by to- or -ing.

Try to...	Try -ing
<p>Try to do = attempt to do, make an effort to do:</p> <p>Ex: I tried to keep calm before shouting at that man</p>	<p>Try doing= do something as an experiment or test</p> <p>Ex: It doesn't work. Try pressing the new yellow bottom.</p>

Need to...	Need -ing
<p>Need to do something= it is necessary for me to do it.</p> <p>I need to practise more sports.</p>	<p>Something needs doing= something needs to be done.</p> <p>The batteries in the radio need changing.</p>

Help	Can't help
<p>You can say "help to do" or "help do".</p> <p>Ex: Can you help me to move/ help me move the table?</p>	<p>Can't help doing something = I can't stop myself from doing it.</p> <p>Ex: I can't help laughing.</p>

Verbs like **love, hate, like, enjoy, can't bear, dislike, mind, can't stand**, are often followed by –ing.

After **love, hate and can't bear** you can also use **to + infinitive**, so you can say:

Ex: I love reading books or I love to read books.

You can also say "I like doing something" or "I like to do something". Often it doesn't matter which you use.

In **British English**, there is sometimes a difference between “**I like going**” and “**I like to go**”. The first one means “I enjoy it” and the second one means “I think it is good or right to do it”. Finally, would like/would love/ would hate/ would prefer are usually followed by to...(infinitive).

Ex: I'd love to travel to Mexico.

1.5. Prefer and would rather

You can use “prefer to do” or “prefer -ing” to say what you prefer in general.

Ex: I prefer living in London or I prefer to live in London.

We use “would prefer” to say what somebody wants in a particular situation (not in general):

Ex: Would you prefer juice or coke?

Would rather (do) = would prefer (to do). After **would rather** we use the infinitive **without to**.

Ex: I'd rather go by car.

The negative is “I'd rather not (do something).”

Ex: I'm tired. I'd rather not go out this evening.

When you want somebody to do something, you can say “I'd rather you did something”.

In this structure we use the past, but the meaning is present or future, not past.

1.6. Preposition + ing

If a preposition is followed by a verb, the verb ends in -ing. **For example:**

	Preposition	Verb (-ing)	
Are you interested	In	Working	for us?
I'm not very good	At	Learning	Languages.
He must be fed up	With	Cooking	
The advantages	Of	Studying	Abroad.
The knife is	For	Cutting	
How	About	Playing	golf?
I eat pasta	Instead of	Eating	Vegetables.
She went to the disco	In spite of	Staying	At home.



Before and **after**, **by** and **without** also go followed by – ing:

- **Before** visiting her, phone them.
- **After** leaving school, they moved to Chicago.
- You can improve your English **by** reading more.
- I ran two hours **without** stopping.

When **to** is a preposition and it is followed by a verb, you must say **to +ing**.

Ex: Are you looking forward to seeing he again?

2. Focus on Vocabulary: Idioms and Metaphors

2.1. Idioms and fixed expressions

Idioms are fixed expressions with meanings that are usually not clear or obvious. The individual words often give you no help in deciding the meaning. The expression **to feel under the weather**, which means 'to feel unwell', is a typical idiom.

Tips for dealing with idioms

Think of idioms as being just like single words; always record the whole phrase in your notebook, along with information on grammar and collocation.

Idioms are usually rather informal and include an element of personal comment on the situation. They are sometimes humorous or ironic.

Be careful how you use them. Never use them just to sound 'fluent' or 'good at English'. In a formal situation with a person you do not know, don't use them if you are not sure of its appropriateness.

Idioms can be grouped in a variety of ways. Here are some possible types of grouping.

Grammatical

verb + object

poke your nose in (to) (interfere)

be over the moon (extremely happy)

feel down in the dumps (depressed/low)

be in the red (have a negative bank balance)

By verb or other key word (e.g. idioms with make)

I don't see why you have to make a meal out of everything.

(exaggerate the importance of everything)

I think we should make a move. (go/leave)

Grammar of idioms

It is important when using idioms to know just how flexible their grammar is. Some are more fixed than others. For instance, barking up the wrong tree (be mistaken) is always used in continuous, not simple form.

Ex: I think you're barking up the wrong tree.



There is also another criteria to study them, paying attention to the different semantic fields in which they can be used:

Here you can find more examples of idioms that can be useful in specific situation of colloquial English:

Idioms describing people

Positive and negative qualities

She has **a heart of gold**. (kind, generous)
 She's **as hard as nails**. (cold, difficult)
 He's **as good as gold**. (valuable, worthy)
 He's rather **a cold fish**. (weird, distant)

Note also:

She's **a pain in the neck**. Nobody likes her. (nuisance, difficult)
 He **gets on everyone's nerves**. (irritates everybody)

Positive feelings, moods and states

- Jo's **as happy as the day is long**. (extremely content)
- Everyone seemed **to be in high spirits**. (Lively, enjoying things)
- She seems **to be keeping her chin up**. (happy despite bad things)

Negative feelings, moods and states

- He had a **face as long as a fiddle**. (looked very depressed)
- She certainly **looked down in the dumps**. (looked depressed)
- Gerry is **in a (black) mood**. (a bad mood/temper)
- Mark was **like a bear with a sore head**. (extremely irritable)

Remember

There is an element of exaggeration in these idioms; they make comments on the situation and lighten the tone of what you are saying. So use them only informally.

You may have appreciated the structure of metaphors and comparisons in some of these idioms. In the following lines, we will focus on these structures:

2.1.1. As...as.../ like...

As...as... similes are easy to understand. If you see the phrase **as dead as a doornail**, you don't need to know what a doornail is, simply that the whole phrase means 'totally dead'.

But, remember, fixed similes are not 'neutral'; they are usually informal/colloquial and often humorous. So, use them with care.

Creating a picture in your mind can often help you remember the simile:

- as blind as a bat
- as thin as a rake
- as strong as an ox
- as quiet as a mouse

Some can be remembered as pairs of opposites.

- as heavy as lead
- as light as a feather
- as drunk as a lord
- as sober as a judge
- as black as night
- as white as snow

Some other useful as...as... phrases are:

Examples

- The bed was **as hard as iron** and I couldn't sleep.
- I'll give this plant some water. The soil's **as dry as a bone**.
- He's **as mad as a hatter**. He crossed the Atlantic in a bathtub.
- She told the teacher, **as bold as brass**, that his lessons were boring.
- You'll have to speak up; he's **as deaf as a post**.
- She knew the answer **as quick as a flash**.
- When I told him, his face went **as red as a beetroot**.
- When he saw it, his face went **as white as a sheet**. (pale with fear/horror).
- The fish was bad and I was **as sick as a dog**. (vomiting)
- She ran off with my money; I felt **as sick as a parrot**. (bad feeling of disillusionment/ frustration)



In the following lines you can find examples with **Like... expressions**.

- My plan worked **like a dream**, and the problem was soon solved.
- No wonder he's fat. He eats **like a horse and drinks like a fish**.
- Did you sleep well? Yes, thanks, **like a log**.
- Sorry, I forgot to ring him again. I've got **a head like a sieve**
- The boss is **like a bear with a sore head** today. (in a very bad temper)
- She goes around **like a bull in a china shop**. (behaving in a very clumsy, insensitive way)

2.1.2. Binomials

Are expressions (often idiomatic) where two words are joined by a conjunction (usually "and"), and can also be considered in this section.

The order of the words is usually fixed. It is best to use them only in informal situations, with one or two exceptions.

- odds and ends: small, unimportant things.
- give and take: a spirit of compromise.
- part and parcel of: part of / belong to.
- ranting and raving at: shouting / very angry
- rack and ruin: ruined/decayed
- prim and proper: rather formal and fussy
- rough and ready: poor standard.
- wine and dine: entertain

► Many grammar words combine to form binomials.

Ex: There are cafés here and there. (scattered round)

Ex: We've had meetings on and off. (occasionally)

Ex: I've been running back and forth all day. (to and from somewhere)

Ex: He is unemployed and down and out. (without a home or money)

Ex: She's better now, and out and about again. (going out)

Ex: She ran up and down the street. (in both directions)

Your language probably has many binomials. Make sure those which look similar in English have the same word order as your language. These three are very neutral binomials and can be used in formal or informal situations. Try translating them.

Examples

A **black and white** film, please.

Ladies and gentlemen, your attention, please!

There was **hot and cold** water in every room.

3. Communicative skills (Listening and speaking): Everyday expression.

Everyday spoken language is full of fixed expressions that are not necessarily difficult to understand, but which have a fixed form which does not change. These have to be learnt as whole expressions.

Conversation building expressions:

These are some common expressions that help to organise what we are saying.

Expression	Meaning
As I was saying, ...	takes the conversation back to an earlier point
As you say.....	repeats something someone has already said
Talking of children,	starting a new topic
If you ask me,.....	if you want my opinion
That reminds me,	sth makes you think of something important
Come to think of it,.....	sth in the conversation makes you realise sth

*sth: something

Key words:

Some everyday expressions can be grouped around key words.

- This and that, for example, occur in different expressions:
- This is it. (this is an important point)
- That's it. (that's the last thing, we have finished).
- We talked about this and that, or this, that and the other. (unimportant matters).
- So, that's that, then. (that is agreed, settled, finished).



Common expressions for modifying statements

- If the worst comes to the worst, ... (if the situation goes worse)
- If all else fails, ... (if nothing else succeed)
- What with one thing and another, (because of a lot of different circumstances)
- When it comes to education, (in the matter of...).
- As far as I'm concerned, ..(from my point of view).
- As luck would have it, ...(as a result of bad luck).

4. Writing: Joining sentences.

4.1. Introduction and conclusion

When writing an essay, the introduction is important for several reasons. Firstly, if it is well elaborated, it will create a good impression on the reader catching his/her attention.

A good introduction should not be too long, although its length will depend on the type of writing produced.

Secondly, an introduction usually includes the following elements: a definition of the topic, a description of the problems to be considered and a structure of the writing and sequence of the main points.

A conclusion is needed to finish the writing. Drawing a conclusion implies making a summary of the main points developed throughout the essay. In addition, it is needed one's opinion or viewpoint on the subject matter. Avoid introducing new arguments or ideas in your conclusion. To introduce the conclusion, the following connectors can be really useful: In short, in a word, In brief, To sum up, In conclusion, On the whole, Altogether, In all.

Avoid.

4.2. Expressing advantages and disadvantages

You may be asked to talk about or write a composition on the advantages or disadvantages on a given topic. Before starting to talk or to write, take into account the following suggestions:

- Think about the advantages and disadvantages
- Decide in which order you will mention them.
- Write an introduction (paragraph 1) giving an overview of how important the topic is.
- Write out your list of advantages (paragraph 2)
- Write out your list of disadvantages (paragraph 3)
- You can use some of the following connectors to join the sentences and paragraphs of your composition:

- On the one hand / on the other hand
- However, Nevertheless, In contrast, Yet
- One of the advantages/disadvantages of...is.
- The main advantage/disadvantage of...is.
- A further advantage of/ drawback with...is

- Write a conclusion in which you say which of the sides you agree more with and why.



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