

Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases



An **infinitive** is a verb form made up of the word “to” and the base form of the verb. Infinitives and infinitive phrases (infinitives + their modifiers and objects) can function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

They can function as **nouns**.

In our evening classes, we learn to cook.

The infinitive *to cook* is the object of the verb *learn*.

To see the northern lights is one of my dreams.

The infinitive phrase *to see the northern lights* is the subject of the sentence.

They can function as **adjectives**.

Veronica bought a new bicycle to ride.

The infinitive *to ride* modifies the noun *bicycle*.

My favorite month to go camping is May.

The infinitive phrase *to go camping* modifies the noun *month*.

They can function as **adverbs**.

To win, they need just one more touchdown.

The infinitive *to win* modifies the verb *need*.

Darius ran down the block to catch the bus.

The infinitive phrase *to catch the bus* modifies the verb *ran*.

*Keep in mind that the word “to” isn’t always used as part of an infinitive! In the sentence below, “to” is used as a preposition. It is followed by a noun phrase.

We walked to the fire station.

The preposition *to* is followed by the noun phrase *the fire station*.

Underline the **infinitive** or **infinitive phrase** in each sentence. Then, write whether it functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

- 1 My uncle always says that the best attitude **to have** is one of gratitude and optimism. adjective
- 2 Naomi’s dream is **to fly**, so she signed up for flying lessons at a local flight school. noun
- 3 **To avoid burning an entire batch of cookies**, Cass set the timer for ten minutes. adverb
- 4 **To thrive**, most succulents need six to eight hours of sunlight each day, though many can survive on less than that. adverb
- 5 Do you really need **to practice the drums at 6 o’clock in the morning?** noun
- 6 Sasha’s favorite place **to explore** is the collection of tide pools near her dad’s house. adjective
- 7 **To say the movie was bad** would be an understatement; it was the worst film Jo had ever seen! noun
- 8 When we go to art class, our teacher always encourages us **to use more colors and textures**. adverb
- 9 The only way **to reach the mountaintop lodge** is by hiking one of three trails to the summit. adjective
- 10 Every Saturday, I take Buster and Toby to the dog park **to play**, and then we go to the pond for a swim. adverb