

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