What is The Infinitive?

Verbs which are not limited by number, person and time are called Non-Finite Verbs. An **Infinitive** is one of them other being Gerunds and Participles.

The infinites are those non-finites that simply express the state or action denoted by the verb. Ex:-

- He never succeeds in the examination
- He wishes to succeed.

In Ex. 1 verb succeeds has he as its subject and hence is limited by its number and person thus it is a finite verb.

But in **Ex.2** to succeed has no subject and hence it is not limited by number or person of the subject thus a non-finite verb or **an infinitive.**

Infinitives will almost always begin with '**to**' followed by the simple form of the *Verb*. However there are certain Exceptions. An Infinitive will lose its '**to**' when it follows certain *Verbs*. Some of these are feel, hear, help, let, make, see, watch etc.

Infinitive Examples:

- He wanted to run fast.
- She wanted to buy a bun.
- Jai failed to recover his lost mobile phone.
- I was not able to understand the reason.

Infinitives can be further classified as:-

(i) "To" infinitives

Ex. He never succeeds in the examination. In this example **to succeed** is a "To infinitive"

(ii) Pure infinitive i.e the infinitive without the use of "to"

Ex. I made him **sit** down. In this example **sit** is an infinitive used without the use of "to".

Use of Infinitive

Infinitives are used in various ways. The most common uses of the infinitive are to indicate the purpose or intention of an action.

I. Infinitives are used after *certain verbs*.

allow	need	offer	teach

Examples:

- We should not *allow* him **to stay**.
- Jai *needs* **to leave** for work early.
- I did not *offer* **to travel** with him.
- You should *teach* your children **to behave**.

Some verbs can be followed by the **-ing** form *or* the **Infinitive** without a big change in meaning: *begin, continue, hate, intend, like, love, prefer, propose, start*.

- It started to rain.
  It started raining.
- I like to play tennis.
  I like playing tennis.

II. Infinitives can be used after **Adjectives**.

depressed	embarrassed	helpless	naughty

Examples:

- I was *depressed* **to see** him.
- He is *embarrassed* **to watch** that movie.

This includes **too + adjective**:

- The weight was *too heavy* **to float**.
- His tea was *too hot* for him **to drink**.

The infinitive form is used after **adjective + enough**:

- He was *strong enough* **to lift** it.
- Vivek is *rich enough* **to buy** two.

III. Infinitives can be used as ***Nouns.***

Examples:

a) To play football is the only thing Happy wants after his long day of work at the office.

- ***To play*** functions as a noun because it is the subject of the sentence.

b) No matter how important the mathematics class is, Kaku turns his head and refuses ***to study***.

- ***To study*** functions as a ***Noun*** because it is the direct object for the verb refuses.

IV. Infinitives can be used ***Adverbs***.

- Happy braved the icy rain ***to rescue*** the old dog abandoned by someone. ***To rescue*** functions as an ***Adverb*** because it explains *why* Happy braved the challenging weather.

V. Infinitives may occur with or without "**to**". Such Infinitives are known as **Bare Infinitives**.

- **to have + past participle -** to have + broken, to have + seen, to have + saved.
- **to be + present participle -** to be + swimming, to be + joking, to be + waiting**.**
- **to have been + present participle** - to have been + crying, to have been + waiting, to have been + painting.
- **to be + past participle** - to be given, to be shut, to be opened.

VI. **Split Infinitive** – Split Infinitive is an Infinitive wherein the '**to**' is separated from its *Verb* by other words. Split infinitives should be avoided and used only when alternative words seem excessively awkward or clumsy.

Examples:

- Jai's instructor told him **to** never **look** back.
- She told me I had **to** quickly **finish** this bread.
- I thought it best **to** quietly **sneak** away from the accident.
- I was told **to** always **pay** attention in class.

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