

What Is an **Infinitive**?

An infinitive is a verb that functions as a **noun, adjective, or adverb** in order to express an opinion, purpose of an object or action, or answer the questions who, what, or why.

It is formed by using the word “to” + base form of the verb.

For example, “**to cook**,” “**to eat**,” “**to drink**” and “**to sleep**.”

1. As a **NOUN**

Again, what are nouns? Nouns are names of people, places, things, et cetera.

An infinitive can either be the subject or the object of the sentence.

When we say the subject, it performs the action, therefore, it works as a noun.

It can also serve as a direct object.

A direct object receives the action in the sentence and therefore the infinitive also works as a noun.

#1 Example:

I love **to eat**.

In this sentence, the verb is “love.”

Who or what receives the action of being loved? The infinitive “to eat.”

This makes “to eat” the direct object of the sentence.

In this case, the infinitive functions as a noun that expresses an opinion. It could be replaced with a person, place, or thing, as in, “I love desserts.” or “I love cakes.”

#2 Example:

To watch Disney movies is what I want to do.

In this example, we have the verb “is.”

Who or what is it that I want to do? The infinitive “To watch.”

In this case, the infinitive “to watch” is the sentence’s subject.

This means that the infinitive functions as a noun in this sentence.

Exercise: Use the following infinitives as nouns in sentences.

a. To run

b. To walk

c. To cook

d. To understand

e. To make

2. As an **ADJECTIVE**

An adjective is a word that modifies (adds to or describes) a noun. So infinitives function as adjectives when they modify or describe nouns in a sentence.

Example:

Her dream **to become** a fashion designer came true.

What is the purpose of “to become” in this sentence?

It describes her dream.

Exercise: Use the following infinitives as adjectives in sentences.

a. To change

b. To accomplish

c. To design

d. To speak

e. To run

3. As an **ADVERB**

What are adverbs? Adverbs modify or describe adjectives, verbs, or other adverbs. They provide additional information about what, where, how, and to what extent or degree. Sometimes adverbs also answer the question, “Why?”

Infinitives function as adverbs when they are used to give more information about adjectives, verbs, or other adverbs in the sentence.

Example:

The women were happy to go on a night out.

In this sentence, the infinitive is “**to go**.”

What is the purpose of “to go” in this sentence?

The infinitive “to go” gives us more information about the adjective “happy”; it tells us what the women were **happy** about (going on a night out).

In this case, the infinitive functions as an adverb.

Exercise: Use the following infinitives as adverbs in sentences.

a. To see

b. To feel

c. To hear

d. To talk

e. To taste
