Section 7  infinitives and -ing forms

page 88

language notes

Noun-like uses of -ing forms may correspond to infinitives in other languages. Consequently, students may take some time to learn which of the two is used in one situation or another. The main patterns should be known at this level, but and even advanced students may sometimes have difficulty in making the right choice spontaneously:

(*)To smoke is bad for you.

*She went out without to say anything.

The main continuing problem is the case where one verb is followed by another (see pages 93–101). There are no good rules to tell students whether a particular verb is followed by an infinitive or an -ing form, and students have to learn the correct structure on a case-by-case basis. Typical mistakes:

*I suggested to take a short break.

*She pretending understanding what they meant.

Pronunciation: to is normally unstressed, and pronounced /tə/ before a consonant. The ‘Pronunciation for grammar’ exercises will help students who have trouble perceiving the form in fast speech.

possible further activities

The quotations  The quotations are intended simply for students to read, as an engaging introduction to the topic. If it seems useful, they could briefly say which are their favourites.

pages 90–91

possible further activities

Personalisation (1)  Ask students when or where they would like to have lived. Help with the vocabulary used for historical periods. (‘I would like to have lived in Classical Greece / in Ancient China / during the 18th century / the Renaissance / the Russian revolution / the 1960s …’) (‘I would like to have grown up in Canada…’). Ask students what period of history they would like to have lived in, or what country they would like to have grown up in (and why).

Personalisation (2)  Ask students to talk or write about unrealised plans, as follows:

I was to have …, but …

page 92

possible further activities

New proverbs  Get students to make up their own version of the proverb at the bottom of the page:

It is better to … than …

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.

➔ Section 7 continues
language notes

Grammars sometimes give a ‘rule’ which says that verbs that look towards the future (e.g. *hope*, *expect*) are followed by infinitives, while verbs that look back at the past (e.g. *miss*, *regret*) are followed by *-ing* forms. While there is certainly a tendency in this direction, we don’t feel it is strong enough for this generalisation to be useful.

Note that *pretend* (which comes in Exercise 1) may be a ‘false friend’: a similar word in some languages means ‘claim’ (as in the old expression ‘a pretender to the throne’).

possible further activities

*Quick revision*  Say the beginnings of sentences, using some of the verbs from these pages. Students have to add ‘to go out’ or ‘going out’ as quickly as possible. For example:

- ‘I’ve agreed’ – ‘to go out’
- ‘I can’t face’ – ‘going out’
- ‘I want to avoid’ – ‘going out’
- ‘I failed’ – ‘to go out’
- ‘I don’t feel like’ – ‘going out’
- ‘I offered’ – ‘to go out’
- ‘I can’t afford’ – to go out
- ‘I attempted’ – to go out
- ‘I miss’ – ‘going out’
- ‘I’m preparing’ – ‘to go out’
- ‘I don’t mind’ – ‘going out’

*Personalisation: pretending*  Get students to talk about their childhood games: what did they pretend to be?

*Mime*  Students (or you) mime different kinds of people, animal etc. The class decide what is being imitated and say ‘You’re pretending to be a …’.

*Personalisation: ‘can’t afford’*  Get students to complete one or more of the following sentences:

- I can’t afford to …
- I can only afford to …
- I wish I could afford to …

*Feel like*  Ask students what they feel like doing right now.

language notes

The **object + infinitive** structure, after verbs expressing wishes, is peculiar to English, and does not have an equivalent in most other languages. Some students may still find it strange even at this level:

- *My parents wanted that I study architecture.*
- *I didn’t mean that you do it all by yourself.*

possible further activities

*Other people’s wishes*  Ask students what other people in their lives want/wanted them to do/be. (‘My parents want me to study medicine.’ ‘My father wanted me to be a lawyer.’)

*Likes and dislikes*  Ask students to complete one or more of the following sentences:

- I like people …ing …
- I love people …ing …

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use. ➔ Section 7 continues
I dislike people …ing …
I hate people …ing …

possible further activities

Personalisation: memories  Ask students to complete one or both of the following sentences:
   I’ll never forget …ing …
   I still remember …ing …
Ask them if they can find interesting sentences on the internet beginning in the same way.

Personalisation: interests  What are students interested in doing in the future? (’I’m interested in studying architecture / travelling to South America …’.)

Looking for solutions  Tell students that your brother/son/nephew has quarrelled with his girlfriend. She won’t speak to him. What do they think he should try doing? (’He could try writing to her.’)

language notes

The structure in easy to understand, nice to talk to is peculiar to English; most expressions of this kind are unlikely to have equivalents in students’ languages. They must realise that the infinitives after these adjectives mean ‘for people to …’. So we might say for example that a particular kind of fish is ‘good to eat’, but not that it is ‘good to swim fast’. Even advanced students may continue to have difficulty constructing these expressions correctly:
   *His lectures are easy to understand them.
   *She’s nice to talk to her.
or may prefer easier alternatives:
   It’s easy to understand his lectures.

possible further activities

Personalisation: things to do  Tell the students some things that you have to do tonight / this week / …, using the structure noun + infinitive. For example:
   I’ve got some letters to write.  I’ve got some homework to correct.  I’ve got some phone calls to make / some clothes to wash / a book to read / …
Students tell you if they have the same things to do; and what other things they have to do. (’I haven’t got any letters to write. I’ve got some people to see.’)

Descriptions  Tell students to prepare descriptions of three common objects, using the structure something to … + preposition. They give their definitions; the others have to decide what is being defined. For example:
   ‘Something to sit on.’ – ’A chair,’
   ‘Something to cut with.’ – ’A knife.’

Good to eat etc  Give students a time limit. How many of these can they think of in, say, two minutes?
   Something that is:
      easy to eat
      hard to eat
      nice to drink
      not nice to drink
      pleasant to think about
      unpleasant to think about

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.  ➔ Section 7 continues
language notes
This is another idiomatic structure which may take time to get used to. The form with for there to be is likely to seem particularly strange to many students.

The ‘Pronunciation for grammar’ exercises will help students to perceive the unstressed syllables in these structures and to pronounce them with natural rhythm.

possible further activities
Students’ opinions Ask students to make as many sentences as they can on the following pattern:
- It’s important for children to …
- It’s not important for politicians to …
- It’s essential for employers to …
- It’s unnecessary for teachers to …
- It’s silly for people to …

language notes
Even at this level, some students may have trouble with the to … ing structure. They may need a little time to understand that to can be a preposition (if it can have a noun after it, as in look forward to), and that this is not the same as the to of the infinitive.

possible further activities
Personalisation Ask students to complete one or both of the following sentences:
- I’ll never get used to …ing.
- I really look forward to …ing.

Internet Can students find interesting sentences on the internet beginning as follows?
- “I’ll never get used to being”
- “I really look forward to being”

Military service Many years ago, one of the authors of this book had to do two years’ military service. The first few weeks were tough, because he had to do a lot of things he wasn’t used to. For example, he wasn’t used to ironing his own clothes. Can students suggest other things that may have been difficult because he wasn’t used to doing them?

language notes
The structure with object pronoun + -ing (e.g. Do you mind me speaking English?) is probably becoming more common, though the version with possessives (… my speaking) is still preferred in formal writing, especially at the beginning of a clause (My speaking English irritated them).