

Infinitive or Gerund? The Bolinger Principle

(Parts adapted from *The Grammar Book*)

Some verbs can combine with both infinitive verbs and gerunds. (Example: *like to do, like doing*.) Meaning changes according to which form is used. The meaning of some of these verb combinations changes very little—in fact, it is more a matter of nuance than of meaning. The meaning of other verb combinations changes a lot.

Nuance change

- I like camping in the mountains. (It's so peaceful **here**.) *more immediate, vivid*
- I like to camp in the mountains. (It's so peaceful **there**.) *more remote, abstract*
- Helen started doing her homework at 8 p.m. (and she finished at 11 p.m.). *suggests that she continued after starting*
- Helen started to do her homework at 8 p.m. (but the phone rang and interrupted her work). *abstract, no emphasis on continuing nature*

Meaning change. Use of infinitive and gerund totally changes the meaning of these verb combinations that have other head verbs, like *remember, forget, try*.

- I remember locking the door. (remembering occurred after locking)
- I remembered to lock the door. (remembering occurred before locking)
- I tried closing the window, but that didn't help. I still felt cold.
- I tried to close the window, but I couldn't. It was stuck.

Unnoticeable or practically nonexistent change

- These days, investing in financials is not a good idea.
- These days, to invest in financials is not a good idea.
- When to fly is to soar.
- When flying is soaring.
- *Interesting* doesn't mean to have many interests.
- *Interesting* doesn't mean having many interests.

Continue doing or continue to do?

There is no difference in meaning, but there may be a slight difference in temporal focus.

	Past	Present	Future
continue doing	-----		
continue to do	-----		

Is it similar in Korean?

하기가
하는 것

Check out these Web sites

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["Infinitive Phrases - Infinitive & Gerund Grammar Quiz"](#)

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[\(Towards the end:\) "Comparing Gerunds and Infinitives"](#)

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["Gerund or Infinitive? An Interactive Quiz"](#)