

Leaving out **to**-infinitives

A

We can sometimes use **to** instead of a clause beginning with a **to**-infinitive when it is clear from the context what we are talking about:

- I wanted to come with you, but I won't be able **to**. (*instead of ... to come with you.*)
- It might have been better if Rosa had asked for my help, but she chose **not to**. (*instead of ... chose not to ask for my help.*)

However, when we use the verb **be** in the previous sentence or clause the **to**-infinitive form of **be** is repeated in the next clause or sentence:

- Leon **was** frightened – or maybe he just pretended **to be**. (*not ... just pretended to.*)

B

After most nouns and adjectives that can be followed by a **to**-infinitive clause, we can leave out the **to**-infinitive clause or use **to**:

- I'm not going to write another book – at least I don't have any **plans (to)**. (*or ... plans to write another book.*)
- 'Could you and Tom help me move house?' 'Well, I'm **willing (to)**, and I'll ask Tom.'

Also: chance, idea, opportunity, promise, suggestion; afraid, delighted, determined

We can also leave out a **to**-infinitive or use **to** with some verbs:

- Alex will collect us by 10 o'clock. He **promised (to)**.
- 'You were supposed to buy some sugar.' 'Sorry, I **forgot (to)**.'

Also: agree, ask, begin, refuse, start, try

After verbs which must have a complement (i.e. a phrase which completes the meaning of the verb) we can't leave out **to**:

- I admit that I took her watch, but I didn't **mean to**.
- Have you thought about getting vaccinated against cholera before going there? I'd certainly **advise you to**.

Also: afford, be able, choose, deserve, expect, fail, hate, hope, intend, love, need, prefer

C

After **want** and **would like** in **if**-clauses and **wh**-clauses we can often leave out a **to**-infinitive or use **to**:

- You're welcome to dance *if you'd like (to)*.
- You can do *whatever you would like (to)*.
- Call me Ben *if you want (to)*.
- Come and see us *when you want (to)*.

In other clauses (not **if**- and **wh**-clauses) we include **to**:

- I was planning to see you tomorrow, and I **would still like to**.
- I offered to clean your car because I really **want to**, not because I hope to be paid.

In **if**-clauses and **wh**-clauses we usually leave out **to** after **like**. Compare:

- You can have one if you **like**. *and* You can have one if you'd **like (to)**.
- Leave whenever you **like**. *and* Leave whenever you'd **like (to)**.

However, we include **to** with negative forms of **want**, **would like**, and **like**, including in **if**-clauses and **wh**-clauses:

- 'Shall we go and visit Laura?' 'I **don't really want to**.'
- I should have phoned Jo last night, but it was so late when I got home I **didn't like to**.
- 'He won't mind you asking him for a loan.' 'Oh, no, I **wouldn't like to**.'

Exercises

65.1 Rewrite the italicised part of each sentence so that it has a similar meaning. Use a verb from the box (use each verb twice) followed by **to** or **to be**. **A**

claimed expected pretended used

- 1 Was she really as good at tennis as she *said she was*? claimed to be
- 2 She occupies a much less important role in the company than she *did before*.
.....
- 3 Lucia was frightened – or maybe she just *acted as if she was*.
.....
- 4 Dan has lost a lot of weight. He's much thinner than he *was before*.
.....
- 5 The last government didn't represent the majority of people, although it *said that it did*.
.....
- 6 My family enjoyed my singing, or at least they *made believe that they did*.
.....
- 7 The Pantheon in Rome wasn't anything like I *imagined it*.
.....
- 8 I didn't get an interview for the job although I *thought that I would*.
.....

65.2 Complete the sentences. Write **to** if it is necessary; write **(to)** if it can be included or omitted. **B**

- 1 I've always wanted to go white-water rafting, but I've never had the opportunity before.
- 2 Luka had to admit that he'd failed, even though he obviously hated
- 3 When the police officer told the crowd to leave the square they refused
- 4 I don't have to walk to work. I do it because I choose
- 5 We didn't want Alina to leave college, but she was determined
- 6 Spain won 3–0, and deserved, after a fine performance.
- 7 A: Shall we ask Dad before we borrow the car? B: Yes, it might be a good idea
- 8 A: Would you present the prizes for the competition? B: I'd be delighted
- 9 A: Would you like to travel first class? B: Well, yes, I'd certainly prefer
- 10 I was hoping to go to Russia this year, but I can't afford

65.3 If necessary, correct B's responses. If they are already correct, write ✓. **C**

- 1 A: Can I have a biscuit? B: Take more than one if you like to.
- 2 A: When shall we start playing the music? B: Whenever you'd like.
- 3 A: Will Sara be able to play? B: I asked her, but she says she doesn't want.
- 4 A: I can't come out tonight, I'm seeing Emma. B: She can join us, if she'd like to.
- 5 A: Where are you going to in Norway? B: I haven't decided yet. I'll just go where I want.
- 6 A: I don't think I'll go after all. B: That's okay. You don't have to if you don't want.
- 7 A: Can the children come too? B: Yes, of course, if they want.
- 8 A: Shall we go out walking tomorrow? B: Yes, I'd like very much.
- 9 A: Could I ask you a personal question? B: Of course. Ask anything you like to.
- 10 A: Did you ask Dr Mori to help you? B: No, he was very busy, so I didn't like.

