

Verb + *-ing* or *to . . .* (1) (*remember/regret, etc.*)

A

Compare *verb + -ing* and *verb + to . . .*:

verb + -ing

- They denied **stealing** the money.
- I enjoy **going** out.

Often we use *-ing* for an action that happens before the first verb or at the same time. So you **deny doing** something *after* you do it, you **enjoy doing** something *while* you do it.

verb + to . . .

- They decided **to steal** the money.
- I want **to go** out.

Often we use *to . . .* for an action that follows the first verb. So you **decide to do** something *before* you do it, you **want to do** something *before* you do it.

This difference is often helpful (see Section B) but does not explain all uses of *-ing* and *to . . .*

B

Some verbs can be followed by *-ing* or *to . . .* with a difference of meaning:

remember

I **remember doing** something = I did it and now I remember this.

You **remember doing** something *after* you have done it:

- I'm absolutely sure I locked the door. I distinctly **remember locking** it. (= I locked it, and now I remember this.)
- He could **remember driving** along the road just before the accident happened, but he couldn't remember the accident itself.

I **remembered to do** something = I remembered that I had to do it, and so I did it.

You **remember to do** something *before* you do it:

- I **remembered to lock** the door when I left, but I forgot to shut the windows. (= I remembered that I had to lock the door, and so I locked it.)
- Please **remember to mail** the letter. (= Don't forget to mail it.)

regret

I **regret doing** something = I did it, and now I'm sorry about it:

- I now **regret saying** what I said. I shouldn't have said it.

I **regret to say / to tell you / to inform you** = I'm sorry that I have to say (etc.):

- (*from a letter*) We **regret to inform** you that we are unable to offer you the job.

go on

Go on doing something = continue doing it:

- The president went **on talking** for hours.
- We must change our ways. We can't go **on living** like this.

Go on to do something = do something new:

- After discussing the economy, the president then went **on to talk** about foreign policy.

C

begin start continue bother

These verbs can be followed by *-ing* or *to . . .* with little or no difference in meaning. So you can say:

- It has started **raining**. *or* It has started **to rain**.
- Don't bother **locking** the door. *or* Don't bother **to lock** . . .

But we do not use *-ing* after *-ing*:

- It's **starting to rain**. (*not* It's starting raining)

Exercises

53.1 Put the verb into the correct form, *-ing* or *to* . . . Sometimes either form is possible.

1. They denied stealing the money. (steal)
2. I don't enjoy _____ very much. (drive)
3. I don't want _____ out tonight. I'm too tired. (go)
4. I can't afford _____ out tonight. I don't have enough money. (go)
5. Has it stopped _____ yet? (rain)
6. Can you remind me _____ some coffee when we go out? (buy)
7. Why do you keep _____ me questions? Can't you leave me alone? (ask)
8. Please stop _____ me questions! (ask)
9. I refuse _____ any more questions. (answer)
10. One of the boys admitted _____ the window. (break)
11. The boy's father promised _____ for the window to be repaired. (pay)
12. "How did the thief get into the house?" "I forgot _____ the window." (lock)
13. I enjoyed _____ you. (meet) I hope _____ you again soon. (see)
14. The baby began _____ in the middle of the night. (cry)
15. Julie has been sick, but now she's beginning _____ better. (get)

53.2 Here is some information about Tom when he was a child.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. He was in the hospital when he was four. | 4. He cried on his first day at school. |
| 2. He went to Miami when he was eight. | 5. He said he wanted to be a doctor. |
| 3. Once he fell into a river. | 6. Once he was bitten by a dog. |

He can still remember 1, 2, and 4. But he can't remember 3, 5, and 6. Write sentences beginning *He can remember . . .* or *He can't remember . . .*

1. He can remember being in the hospital when he was four.
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

53.3 Complete these sentences with an appropriate verb in the correct form, *-ing* or *to* . . .

1. a) Please remember to lock the door when you go out.
b) A: You lent me some money a few months ago.
B: I did? Are you sure? I don't remember _____ you any money.
c) A: Did you remember _____ your sister?
B: Oh no, I completely forgot. I'll phone her tomorrow.
d) When you see Amanda, remember _____ hello for me, OK?
e) Someone must have taken my bag. I distinctly remember _____ it by the window, and now it's gone.
2. a) I believe that what I said was fair. I don't regret _____ it.
b) (after a driving test) I regret _____ that you have failed the test.
3. a) Ben joined the company nine years ago. He became assistant manager after two years. A few years later he went on _____ manager of the company.
b) I can't go on _____ here anymore. I want a different job.
c) When I came into the room, Liz was reading a newspaper. She looked up and said hello to me and then went on _____ her newspaper.