Gerunds, Present Participles, and Infinitives

An **infinitive** is the basic form of a verb. It is commonly used after the word *to*.

*Example*: He likes to run. She needs to study.

A **gerund** is a verb ending in *-ing* that acts like a noun. Because they act like a noun, gerunds may be used as the subject of a sentence:

*Example*: Running regularly will make you feel better. Studying requires most of my time during the day.

There are some **verbs** that must be followed by a gerund.

*Example*: I enjoy writing. Would you mind reading my essay?

If a **gerund** is combined with a **preposition**, it is called a **gerund phrase**:

*Example*: He spends all his time studying to be a doctor.

A **present participle** is a verb ending in *-ing* that still acts like a verb when used in the present or past progressive tense:

*Example*: The girl is speaking to her friends.

   We were listening to music.

*(See reverse side for examples of when to use gerunds vs infinitives.)*

An infinitive or a gerund can be used to express a similar idea. Infinitives are used to describe
actions that may take place in the future or that are possible. Gerunds are used to describe actions that are factual. For example:

**Infinitive:** I would like to go to the mall.

**Gerund phrase:** I like going to the mall.

In this example, the infinitive is used to express a desire to do something that hasn’t happened yet. The gerund phrase is factual.

Here are a few more examples:

**Infinitive:** Do you like to dance?

**Gerund:** Did you like dancing last night?

**Infinitive:** Did you start to write your paper?

**Gerund:** I started writing my paper, and now I’m almost done.

**Infinitive:** I need to sleep more at night.

**Gerund:** Sleeping six to eight hours every night is good for you.

Verbs of perception (feel, hear, notice, observe, see, smell, watch) are often followed by gerunds, but never infinitives. For example:

--I think I hear someone playing a piano.

--Do you smell something burning?