

INTRODUCTION

VERBALS

In English, non-finite verb forms are termed as verbals. The types of verbals are infinitives, participles and gerunds. Verbals are precisely those words that seem to carry the idea of action or being but do not function as true verbs.

The difference between a finite verb and a verbal (nonfinite verb form) lies in the fact that that a finite verb is completely inflected according to five aspects: person(first, second, or third), number (singular or plural), tense(past, present, future), mood(indicative, imperative, or subjunctive), and voice (active or passive). The reason verbs thus inflected are called finite is that these inflections limit the verb, whereas non-finite(unfinished or incomplete) verbs are verb forms that are not completely limited by inflection. Verbals have aspect, voice and tense distinctions, but are not restricted by number and person. The forms called tenses in the non-finite forms usually indicate whether the action expressed by the verbals corresponds to the action expressed by the finite form of the verb(past, present, future), or precedes it.

THE INFINITIVE

I tried not to spy them.

They are not to be disturbed.

An infinitive phrase is a group of words consisting of an infinitive -the root of the verb preceded by to- and the modifiers, pronouns, nouns, noun phrases that function as actors, direct and indirect objects, or complements of the action or state expressed in the infinitive, such as:

We intended to leave early.

THE INFINITIVE FORMS

The following chart introduces the infinitive forms that are useable in contemporary English:

Active Passive Indefinite Progressive Indefinite Progressive Present infinitive to kill to be killing to be killed
- Perfect infinitive to have killed to have been killing to have been killed -

The present infinitive, the ordinary infinitive form (to talk, to walk), is formed with the root of a particular verb plus the particle to. It indicates that the action expressed by the infinitive occurs either at the same time or later than the action expressed by the finite verb in the sentence, and thus refers to present, past or future:

He would have liked to see more people coming to the party.

In the example above, the present infinitive to see is in the same time as the past would have liked.

Jill is anxious to try out her new dress.

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