# Chapter XVII (Part One): Uses of ING-FORMS

❖ **Ing-forms as verbs**.

Ing-forms are often used with the auxiliary *be* to form the main verb phrases of sentences in continuous tenses. Still, we must remember that an ing-form alone can never be the main verb of a sentence.

❖ **Ing-forms as nouns.**

Some ing-forms are so generally used as nouns that we tend to forget their verbal origin. They usually pattern as uncountables, though occasionally the plural ending is added, for instance, in *readings, writings, teachings, misspellings*. As nouns, ing-forms can be subjects, objects or other complements of verbs, and objects of prepositions. In other words, they are found in all the noun positions in sentence patterns. Examples are shown below:

- **Learning** English **is** not easy. **(**As the subject of a verb**)**
- We **enjoy learning** English**. (**As the object of a verb**)**
- Muna is not interested **in learning** English. **(**As the object of a preposition**)**

❖ **Ing-form phrases.**

The verbal nature of the ing-form is illustrated by the fact that it can have its own subject and complement.

a. In formal writing and speaking, the subject of an ing-form is usually a possessive.

- Jack’s forgetting to read the assignment resulted in his failing a quiz.
- Jane’s not bonding in Tab reports prevented her getting a good grade.

b. In less formal language and after sense perception verbs, the subject of an ing-form may be a simple-form noun or an object-form pronoun.

- I watched Jack **doing** his assignment.
- I noticed him **underlining** some sentences.
- I didn't see him **taking** notes.

❖ **Verbs which take ing-form objects**.

Certain verbs frequently take ing-form objects but never infinitives. Other verbs may be followed by ing-forms or infinitives and express the same meaning. In a few cases an ing-form object expresses a meaning which is different from that of the infinitive object.

❖ **The minimal lists below will serve as a guide for practicing the patterns.**

| **These verbs frequently have ing-form objects. They never have infinitive objects.** | **These verbs may be followed by ing forms or infinitives. The meaning of the two patterns is the same.** |
|---|---|
| • **Bill enjoys reading**<br><br>**admit, keep, appreciate, keep on, avoid, postpone, can't help, practice, consider, recall, deny, regret, enjoy, risk, finish, stop, get through, suggest, give up, understand** | • **Bill likes to read**<br>• **Bill likes reading.**<br><br>**continue, attempt, begin, intend, like, neglect, plan, prefer, start, try** |

❖ Sense perception verbs may have either simple or ing-form objects but not infinitives. The subject of the ing-form is usually expressed.

a. The verbs: notice, observe, see, watch, hear, smell and feel
b. The patterns:

- We watched the lab assistant set up the equipment.
- We watched the lab assistant setting up the equipment.
- We saw him heat some glass tubes.
- We saw him heating some glass tubes.

❖ The difference is not really in meaning but rather in emphasis. The ing-form emphasizes the duration of the activity; the simple form suggests that it is completed.

❖ Forget and remember are followed by both ing-forms and infinitives, but the different patterns express different meanings. The difference is in the time relationship between the main verb and its verbal object.

a. Ing -form objects express actions or situations which occur before the action of the main verb.

- Jack remembers talking with his instructor.
- He forgets making an appointment with him.

b. Infinitive objects express actions or situations which occur either after (in the case of remember) or not at all (in the case of forget).

- Jack remembered to make an appointment with his instructor.
- He forgot to keep it.

❖ **Ing-forms as noun modifiers.**

Ing-forms are quite generally used to modify nouns. They occupy the same positions as ordinary adjectives.

a. **Before the noun to be modified**: Teaching assistants, enterprising scientists
b. **After the verb be**: Getting behind is upsetting.
c. **After the noun to be modified**: I find my work challenging.

## ❖ Meanings of ing-form modifiers.

Ing-forms are so commonly used as adjectives that it would be impossible to explain all the different relationships between them and the nouns they modify. However, to help distinguish them from past participle modifiers, we should note these two very frequent uses.

### a. To describe the effect of one person or situation on another

- An interesting person is a person who interests you.
- A boring lecture is a lecture which bores you.
- A challenging lesson is a lesson which challenges you.
- A disappointing experience is an experience which disappoints you.

### a. To indicate an action in process

- A growing boy is a boy who-is-in the process of growing.
- An aching tooth is a tooth which is in the process of aching.
- Boiling water is water which is in the process of boiling.

❖ **Ing-forms in time phrases.**

The only verb form ever used immediately after the time words before, after, until, since, while, and when is the ing-form. Never place an infinitive immediately after one of these words.

- We finish our assignments **before** relaxing.
- We relax **after** finishing our assignments.
- Don't try to listen to the radio **while** studying.

❖ **Ing-forms after other prepositions.**

The only verb form which occurs immediately after a preposition (except to) is the ing-form.

a. Review the use of ing-forms after by.

b. Note the examples of ing-forms after prepositions in the following paragraph.

If you are interested in taking a course in elementary science in a large university, plan on reading the assignments before attending the lectures so that you will understand what is being said. There is no opportunity for asking questions during lectures. Try to get some experience in setting up lab equipment; don't depend on your lab partner doing it for you. And don't be surprised at having to take unannounced quizzes. That is par for the course.

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# Thank you for Listening!