

Remember, regret, try, etc

With some verbs, the choice of a to-infinitive or an ing-form depends on the meaning.

1. Remember and forget

I must remember to post this letter today. It's important.

The clothes are still dirty because I forgot to switch on the machine.

We use 'remember/forget to do' for necessary actions. The remembering is before the action.

I can remember posting the letter. I posted it on Friday morning.

I'll never forget flying over the Grand Canyon. It was wonderful.

We use 'remember/forget doing' for memories of the past. The action is before the remembering.

2. Regret

We regret to inform you that we are not taking on any new staff at present.

'Regret to do something' means to be sorry for something you are doing, e.g. giving bad news.

I regret spending all that money. I've got none left.

'Regret doing something' means to be sorry because of something that happened in the past.

3. Try

I'm trying to run this computer program.

'Try to do something' means to attempt something, to do your best, to make an effort to do something difficult.

I tried clicking on the box, but it doesn't work.

'Try doing something' means to do something which might solve a problem.

4. Mean

I think Nick meant to break that glass. It didn't look like an accident.

'Mean to do something' is the same as to intend to do it.

I'm applying for a visa. It means filling in this form.

'Means doing something' expresses the idea of one thing resulting in another, in the sense of 'involve', 'have a result'.

5. Stop

An old man walking along the road stopped to talk to us.

'Stop to do something' means to stop so that you can do it.

There's too much noise. Can you all stop talking, please.

'Stop doing something' means to end an action, to finish doing it.

6. Go on

The teacher introduced herself and went on to explain about the course.

'Go on to do something' refers to a change of activity.

The teacher told everyone to be quiet, but they went on talking.

'Go on doing something' means to continue doing something.

7. Need

I need to clean my shoes.

This means that I must clean my shoes. I have to clean them.

My shoes need cleaning.

This means that my shoes need to be cleaned.