

Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases (as nouns)

An infinitive is another type of **verbal phrase**, which means it is a verb acting as something other than a verb.

Specifically, an **infinitive** consists of the word "to" immediately followed by a verb.

Ex: to run, to yell, to live, to pontificate

An **infinitive phrase** is made up of an infinitive and any complements or modifiers of the infinitive.

Ex: I need to run to the store. (Here the prepositional phrase "to the store" modifies the infinitive to run, as it tells where we are to run).

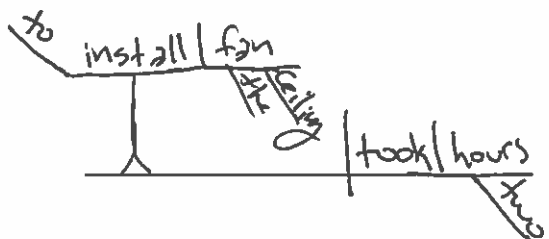
I swore to tie my shoes more tightly in the future. (Here the infinitive is completed by the words that follow it. "my shoes" is the complement (it completes the infinitive) and "more tightly" and "in the future" are modifiers, one of the infinitive, and one of the other modifier).

Infinitives (and infinitive phrases) can act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs, but in this lesson, we'll only focus on them working as nouns. In the examples above, notice how you can replace both phrases with the pronoun "it" and the sentence would technically work (even though it would obviously be less clear). That's how you know the infinitives are working as nouns.

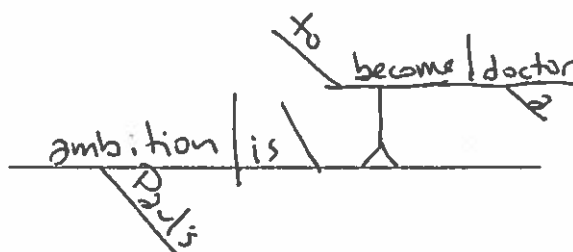
Diagramming Infinitives

These are an odd bunch to diagram. The entire infinitive goes on a sort of tree in the place where the noun would be in the sentence. Notice that the word "to" is on a slanted line, but the verb that completes the infinitive is on a straight line. Any complements to the infinitive go next to the infinitive, and any modifiers go below it.

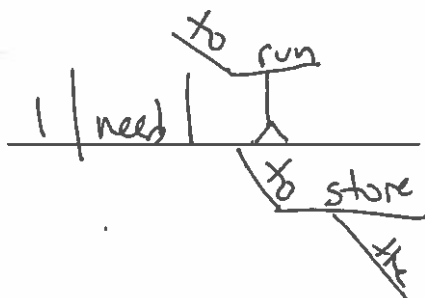
To install the ceiling fan took two hours.



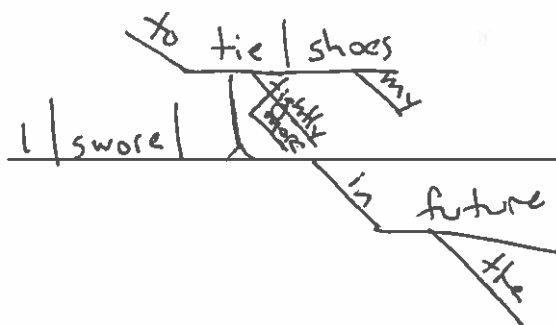
Paul's ambition is to become a doctor.



I need to run to the store.



I swore to tie my shoes more tightly in the future.



Infinitive Phrases (as Nouns)

Directions: Choose eight of the following sentences to diagram on a separate sheet of paper. Every word in the sentence should appear in your diagram. Below the sentences you'll see a ranking of which sentences are easy, medium, and hard, in order to help you choose which ones to do.

1. My hobby is to collect bottle tops.
2. I have always wanted to live in Australia.
3. To tell the truth is always the best policy.
4. His problem, to be incapable of telling the truth, is very serious.
5. He intends to run for governor.
6. My job, to answer the phone and take messages, could be done by a machine.
7. To never get the right answer is very discouraging.
8. He promised to clean his room at frequent intervals.
9. The plan is to leave my car at the station.
10. Leon planned to have dinner and watch some TV.
11. I want to be alone.
12. To admire the book is to admire the author.
13. Don't try to do everything at once.
14. They wanted to propose to open a new plant.
15. His one great goal in life was to was to break the bank.
16. I wanted to give a present to them.
17. She decided to plan to return to school.
18. He disclosed his life's ambition, to write the Great American Novel.

Easy: 1, 3, 12

Fairly Easy: 2, 5, 8, 9, 11, 15

Fairly Hard: 7, 16

Hard: 4, 6, 10, 13, 18

Very Hard: 14, 17