



An **infinitive** is a noun or modifier (adj. or adv.) made from the *to* form of the verb.

Infinitive phrase: An **infinitive** is the general *to* form of the verb made into a noun, adjective, or adverb. This general form of the verb is expressed with the word *to*: *to help*, *to create*, *to hike*, *to exclaim*. Sometimes the *to* is implied, and that is called a **bare infinitive**: *She helped Emma (to) carry her bags*. The infinitive is named for the fact that it is not (*in*) limited (*fin*) in tense/time. Because the infinitive is not limited to a tense, it is never used as a true predicate; we never say, for example, *I to say hello*.

- infinitive as **noun**: **To write is a creative outlet.**
- infinitive as **adjective**: **The story to write is the one about your uncle.**
- infinitive as **adverb**: **I am ready to write.**

A noun? If an infinitive can be a noun, then that means that an infinitive phrase can be the subject of the sentence: *To adopt the puppy will make us happy*. An infinitive phrase can be anything any other noun can be.

To think is one word: We regard an infinitive as one word. In our four-level analysis, an infinitive such as *to think* is a single word, whereas a prepositional phrase such as *to London* is two words. Hamlet's *To be or not to be* is considered to be four words!

No split infinitives: Because an infinitive is only one word, we do not split infinitives with other words. Splitting an infinitive usually means inserting an adverb between the two parts of the infinitive. If we take the infinitive *to swim* and split it with the adverb *swiftly*, we have *to swiftly swim*, which is a split infinitive. It is better to put the adverb outside the infinitive: *to swim swiftly*.

- Wrong: **Glork learned to never gobble his gruel.**
- Right: **Glork learned never to gobble his gruel.**