English Grammar: The Gerund ('___ ing')

The "gerund" form of a verb uses "-ing", and shouldn't be confused with the "continuous" verb tenses. The gerund usually acts as a **noun**. Here are the main contexts:

1) **Gerunds** are used as names of **activities**:

- I love **swimming**. *(Eu amo natação.)*
- **Horse-riding** is not easy. *(Andar de cavalo não é fácil.)*
- Do you like **running**? *(Você gosta de correr?)*

2) **Gerunds follow specific verbs**. When one verb follows another in the same sentence, the second verb is sometimes in the infinitive form and sometimes in the gerund form, depending on the first verb. For example, the verbs "***need***", "***want***" and "***promise***" demand an infinitive:

- We ***need* to go** now.
- I ***want* to see** that film!
- I ***promise* to call** you when I arrive.

However, these verbs demand a "gerund": **enjoy, mind, practice, suggest**, **advise, avoid, consider, deny, finish, keep, imagine, miss, regret, risk.** For example:

- They **enjoy making** cakes.
- Do you **mind closing** the window?
- I **practice speaking** English every day.
- The doctor **suggested drinking** a lot of water.
- I can't **imagine living** without you!
- He **regretted driving** so fast.
- I **miss studying** at school.
- I **finished painting** my house yesterday.

An interesting case is the verb "to stop". Using the infinitive or gerund form after this verb delivers different meanings. Consider these examples:

- I stopped **to smoke**. *(= I wanted to smoke, so I stopped what I was doing.)*
- I stopped **smoking**. *(= I became very sick, so the doctor said "No more smoking!".)*

3) **Gerunds follow prepositions**. If a **verb follows a preposition**, then it must be in the "gerund" form. Examples of prepositions: **in, on, at, by, of, before, after, to, for, about, above, under, through, without, against**. For example:

- She is good **at speaking** English.
- He learned English **by studying** every day.
- I'm tired **of working** at home.
- You can't count **on drinking** coffee to help you stay awake all night.
- Don't forget to brush your teeth **before going** to bed.
- Yesterday, I went home **after leaving** the party.
- I am not used **to living** in an apartment.
- Let's talk **about going** to Europe next year.
- You can't learn a language **without making** mistakes.
- I am **against smoking** in public places.

4) **Following some expressions.** For example:

It's worth: It's worth **looking** at the advantages and disadvantages before you decide.
I can't help: I can't help **thinking** about my ex-girlfriend.
I can't stand: I can't stand **waiting** any more.

5) **Following "when" or "while"** as an alternative to repeating the subject. For example:

- I never listen to music when **driving**.
  *(= I never listen to music when **I drive**.)*

- Bob rarely speaks Portuguese when **teaching** English.
  *(= Bob rarely speaks Portuguese when **he teaches** English.)*

- Maria likes to whistle while **cleaning** the house.
  *(= Maria likes to whistle while **she cleans** the house.)*

- My husband slurps while **drinking** coffee!
  *(= My husband slurps while **he drinks** coffee!)*

6) **Adjectives**

In English, if you use a verb as an adjective, it usually takes the gerund form. For example:

- Is this **drinking** water?
- Do you know where my **riding** boots are?
- I've lost my **reading** glasses.

7) **Subjects of phrases**

In English, if you use a **verb** (or verb phrase) as the **subject** of a sentence, it must be in the **gerund** form. An alternative structure uses '**it**'. For example:

- **Learning English** is useful. *("Learning English" is the subject of the sentence)*
  or: **It** is useful to learn English.
- **Completing the course** is my main objective.
  or: **It** is my main objective to complete the course.
- **Managing a large company** is not easy.
  or: **It** is not easy to manage a large company.

Suggested video options:

Gerunds in 5 simple steps (7 mins): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPXP4FSXwXA
Gerunds and Infinitives (19 mins): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUeAkc4DgOU
What is a gerund? (11 mins): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWhtHcKaNNg
Gerund or Infinitive (14 mins): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VaoDZpzWTw
Não traduza "ING" (15 mins): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZpNIs3IocA

Exercise. Which of these context(s) applies to the sentences below?

Context 1: Name of an activity
Context 2: One verb after another
Context 3: Verb after a preposition
Context 4: After an expression
Context 5: Verb after “when” or “while”
Context 6: An adjective
Context 7: Subject of a phrase

	Context (1-7)
1. He is really bad at **drawing**.	____
2. **Smoking** cigarettes is bad for your health.	____
3. Take off your shoes before **coming** in the house.	____
4. They go **sailing** at weekends.	____
5. He practices **singing** every day.	____
6. She always fiddles with her hair when **speaking** to John.	____
7. How about **driving** around town for a while?	____
8. I suggest **drinking** less coffee and more water.	____
9. I can’t help **dancing** when I hear this song.	____
10. I always take my **swimming** hat to the **swimming** pool.	____
11. He denied **lying** to his teacher.	____
12. **Studying** English is extremely good for the mind and the CV!	____
13. My wife always listens to music while **cooking** dinner.	____