

English Vocabulary – “start/begin/finish/stop/end”

Although the verbs “start/begin” and “finish/stop/end” have similar meanings, they can sometimes be used incorrectly. Let’s take a closer look:

1) Verbs – to start/to begin

- a) to **start** (start/started/started) (usually used in an informal context)
 - transitive/intransitive
 - can be followed by a gerund or infinitive
- b) to **begin** (begin/began/begun) (usually used in a formal context)
 - transitive/intransitive
 - can be followed by a gerund or infinitive

The verbs “start” and “begin” are very similar, and they are often interchangeable. For example:

- I **started** (reading) this book yesterday. / I **began** (reading) this book yesterday.
- It **started** raining early today. / It **began** raining early today.
- Today, our class will **start** at 10 o’clock. / Today, our class will **begin** at 10 o’clock.
- I’ve **started** French classes recently. / I’ve **began** French classes recently.
- I’m ready – you can **start**. / I’m ready – you can **begin**.

However, there are some specific contexts where only “start” can be used. For example:

- He **started** the liquidizer by turning the knob.
- My car didn’t **start** this morning.
- The police officer **started** the tape recorder.
- Henry **started** the fire with a cigarette.
- He **started** his own business last year.
- Let’s **start** the trip at 8am tomorrow.

In general, the verb “start” refers to an action, and the verb “begin” refers to a period. For example:

- In 5 minutes, I will **start** the video.
- In 5 minutes the video will **begin**.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4bBbE8cyAI>

2) Verbs – to finish/to stop/to end (regular verbs)

- a) to **finish** – to **complete** an activity in a natural or predetermined way
 - transitive or intransitive
 - must be followed by a gerund
- b) to **stop** – to **interrupt/pause** an activity temporarily
 - transitive or intransitive
 - must be followed by a gerund
- c) to **end** – to **terminate** an activity in an unplanned way
 - transitive or intransitive
 - cannot be followed by a verb

Example: I **finished** my homework at 10pm.
I **stopped** my homework to have dinner.
I **ended** my homework due to a power failure.

Although the verbs “finish”, “stop” and “end” have similar ideas, they are not interchangeable:

- I've **finished** (reading) the book. (the book is completed)
- I've **stopped** reading the book. (I want to make coffee, the book is not completed)

- She **finished** (eating) her dinner. (she is satisfied)
- Five minutes please - I'm just **finishing** my dinner!
- She **stopped** eating her dinner and ran to the bathroom. (she interrupted her meal)

- He **finished** the race in 26 minutes. (the race was completed)
- He **stopped** running because he twisted his ankle. (the race was interrupted)

- I **stopped** learning English two years ago. (“finished” is not possible here, because there is always something to learn!)

- They **ended** their relationship after 15 years.
- World War II **ended** in 1945.
- The revolution **ended** the monarchy.

- Our class will **finish** at 10 o'clock.
- I'm sorry - I need to **end** our class because my wife has had an accident.
- I need to **stop** our class because I need to get some water.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWeoXQ58Cr4>

3) Nouns

a) start/beginning

The nouns “start” and “beginning” are very similar, and they are usually interchangeable:

- I missed the **start** of the film. / I missed the **beginning** of the film.
- He arrived after the **start** of the class. / He arrived after the **beginning** of the class.

We generally use “start” if we talk about an event, and “beginning” if we talk about a period:

- The **start** of the race was very exciting.
- The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria led to the **start** of the war.
- The **beginning** of the war was in 1914.
- I couldn't find my pen at the **beginning** of the lesson.

b) finish/ending

The nouns “finish” and “ending” are used to describe the final part of something and are usually interchangeable. For example:

- Ice-cream is a great **finish** to a meal.
- The **finish** of the race was fascinating.
- The **ending** of the film was very predictable.
- I loved the **ending** of the book – it was so romantic!

c) end

The noun “end” is used to describe the final point of something in space or time. For example:

- After the **end** of the film we went to a restaurant.
- I always relax with a beer at the **end** of the day.
- I left my car at the **end** of the street.
- Please hold the **end** of the rope.

4) Opposite pairs

to start/stop	to start/pause an activity (e.g. read, drive, drink)
to start/finish	to start/complete an activity (e.g. read a book, watch a film, paint a house)
to begin/end	to start/prematurely finish an activity or state (e.g. marriage, job, career)

the start/finish	the initiation/completion of something (e.g. race, test, book)
the beginning/end	the initiation/completion of something (e.g. race, test, book)
the beginning/finish	the initial/final part of something (e.g. book, film, class)
the beginning/ending	the initial/final part of something (e.g. book, film, class)

Exercise 1. Choose a verb or noun to complete these sentences (answers in white):

1. I thought that the _____ of the film was a little slow.
2. At the _____ of the book there is a useful comprehension exercise.
3. My son _____ guitar classes yesterday.
4. As soon as I heard the gun, I _____ the stopwatch.
5. At the _____ of the race, I was in first position, but I soon lost it.
6. The _____ of the first episode is extremely violent.
7. My father _____ smoking last year due to bad health.
8. I always clean my teeth as soon as I _____ every meal.
9. A big party is a great _____ to a failed marriage.
10. The battle only _____ when everybody was dead or dying.

Other verbs/Phrasal Verbs

to terminate	We must terminate this project – it will be too expensive. I recommend that you let me terminate its life.
to complete	I need to complete this form before I send it. He always completes what he starts.
to run out	The coffee has run out. I need to buy some more. On Saturday, we ran out of gas in the middle of town!
to be over	I think that our relationship is over. When will the film be over?
to carry through	I started the process, so I have to carry it through. Can you carry the project through for me?
to phase out	This item doesn't sell well, we should phase it out. I need to phase sugar out from my diet.
to cut out	You should cut out salt from your diet. You should cut slang out from your language.
to end up	He missed so many classes, he ended up failing the year. I was walking around for ages and ended up here!

Exercise 2. Complete the sentences using the verbs/phrasal verbs above (answers in white):

- 1) I must _____ my report before Monday.
- 2) The game _____. It's a tie!
- 3) We should _____ sugary drinks from our lives. They are unhealthy.
- 4) You have to _____ your homework before you can watch TV.
- 5) The government is going to _____ all grants for foreign students.
- 6) The butter has _____. Could you go to the corner shop and get some more please?
- 7) I always _____ watching a film on Netflix when I have nothing to do.
- 8) It's an extremely long and complicated process. I really don't know if I can _____ it _____.