

Infinitive clause as subject and object

In older English, it was common to use an infinitive clause as the subject of a sentence.

To find fault with others is easy.

To wait for people who are never punctual makes me angry.

In modern English, this is unusual in an informal style. We more often use it as an 'introductory subject' and put the infinitive clause later.

It is easy to find fault with others.

It makes me angry to wait for people who are never punctual.

Infinitive clause as complement

An infinitive clause can be used as subject complement after be and other copular verbs.

His goal was to become a well known writer.

Your duty is to finish the work in time.

Sentences like these can also be written with an introductory it.

It was his goal to become a well known writer.

It is your duty to finish the work in time.

Infinitive as object

An infinitive clause can be used as the object of a verb.

I want to go.

I would like to have cornflakes for breakfast.

Here is a list of common verbs that can be followed by infinitives.

Afford, agree, appear, arrange, ask, attempt, beg, begin, care, choose, consent, continue, dare, decide, expect, fail, forget, happen, hate, help, hope, intend, learn, like, love, manage, mean, neglect, offer, prefer, prepare, pretend, promise, propose, refuse, regret, seem, start, trouble, try, want and wish

I decided to quit smoking.

I forgot to post the letter.

I managed to do it.