

'ing' forms used like nouns

Some nouns and adjectives can be followed by -ing forms. We usually use a preposition to connect the noun or adjective to the -ing form. Note that most nouns and adjectives that can be followed by -ing forms can't be followed by infinitives.

The thought of failing never bothered him. (NOT The thought to fail never bothered him.)

I hate the idea of getting old. (NOT I hate the idea to get old.)

She is very good at picking up non-verbal cues. (NOT She is very good to pick up non-verbal cues.)

I am tired of listening to advice. (NOT I am tired to listen to advice.)

Certain nouns and indefinite pronouns can be followed by for + -ing form. This structure is used to express the purpose of an object.

I need something for cleaning copper.

Have you got any machine for cutting grass and weeds?

When we talk about our purpose in using a particular object, we usually use an infinitive, not an -ing form.

We used a pair of garden shears to clip the hedge. (More natural than 'We used a pair of garden shears for clipping the hedge.)