**Tip #4 INFINITIVES**

**Basic Guidelines**

Infinitive means “without limit”, and is one of a group of three special word forms called “verbals”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Type</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Forms</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) infinitive (不定詞)</td>
<td>(weak) noun</td>
<td>to + verb to find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) gerund (動名詞)</td>
<td>(strong) noun</td>
<td>verb-ing finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) participle (分詞)</td>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>verb-ing finding having verb-ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>verb-ed having found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>having acted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*To conquer unknown areas of science is Taro’s desire.*

"to conquer" = noun (名詞) and is used as the subject of the sentence

*The desire to conquer unknown areas of science is Taro’s.*

"to conquer" = adjective (形容詞) and describes what kind of desire

*Taro desires to conquer unknown areas of science.*

"to conquer" = a noun phrase that actually functions to describe “desire”

Writers too often misuse the infinitive because they were mistaught, or because the concepts were never learned properly. When thinking of the word “infinitive”, associate the word “infinity” “without limitations”. Infinitive use more commonly communicates uncertainty and doubt—though more psychologically—and is often used in situations in which logic and future possibilities are stressed.

The gerund (V-ing 動名詞) —likely mistaught as well—stresses the concept of certainty much more than the infinitive, and often refers to things done or finished in the past; thus, things that are known or certain.

In short many writers overuse the infinitive in today’s technical, scientific, and even business writing; and use the gerund too little. For numerous reasons dating back to the 1980s, the gerund has become more and more frequently used for stressing facts or factual-like information.
[ to + verb ] style

To conquer unknown areas of science is Taro’s desire.

more logical
more uncertain
feel unsure action will be done (future)
less persuasive
softer nuance

Taro is strictly adhering to the logical nature of the English language and is telling the reader/listener that he is unsure whether he will be able to conquer even “one unknown area of science” sometime in his future life. Only the future holds the answer.

[ verb-ing ] style

Conquering unknown areas of science is Hanako’s desire.

more emotional
more certain
feel sure action will be done (future)
more persuasive
stronger nuance

Hanako is telling the reader/listener that she will definitely achieve success; that is, she will “conquer at least one unknown area of science” sometime in her future life. There is no doubt in Hanako’s mind, and she has the determination that will lead her to success.

1. **ORIGINAL**

The topic of my current study is to develop a new method for finite element analysis.

**COMMENTS**
The topic of the writer’s study or research is already decided: how to develop a new method for finite element analysis. The infinitive “to develop” implies that (logically speaking) uncertainty exists as to whether the writer will actually be able to develop a new method or not; that is, whether the writer will succeed or fail. This is perfectly logical because any such success or failure must happen in the future. However, this kind of English lacks the stronger, more emotional persuasive power of the gerund (V-ing) form. Both are goods forms of English: just use them to communicate what you really want the reader to understand

2. **ORIGINAL**

To decipher DNA binding motifs of transcription factors (TFs) is important to predict their target genes and (to) understand their biological roles.

**COMMENTS**
If something is truly “important”, then uncertainty impedes the writer from communicating the intended message; thus, V-ing style is preferred. If you choose to use the infinitive style for some reason, be careful of parallel grammatical structure: To decipher DNA binding motifs of transcription factors (TFs) is important to predict their target genes and to understand their biological roles.
3. **ORIGINAL**

*In MR development, the energy conversion process from the MMW to a high pressure jet, leading a thrust impulse, is an important issue to improve thrust efficiency.*

**REVISED**

*In MR development, the energy conversion process from the MMW to a high pressure jet, leading a thrust impulse, is an important issue for improving thrust efficiency.*

**COMMENTS**

The “important issue” is making thrust efficiency better. This is certain; there is no doubt in the writer’s mind; thus, V-ing style is preferred.

Notice in the additional revised example how the relative pronoun (関係代名詞) “that” followed by a pure verb form (present tense) provides even more impact.

**Another example**

*This paper proposed a method to obtain quantitative change in muscle activity caused by changes in sensory input conditions.*

**REVISED**

*This paper proposed a method for obtaining quantitative change in muscle activity caused by changes in sensory input conditions.*

*This paper proposed a method that obtains quantitative change in muscle activity caused by changes in sensory input conditions.*

4. **ORIGINAL**

*... was better to stack GaAs ...*

**REVISED**

*... was better at stacking GaAs ...*

**COMMENTS**

The writer is describing a conclusion concerning a result that has already been achieved; therefore, certainty (V-ing) is preferred, What is more, the V-ing form helps sell your idea!
5. **Original**

Ours is believed to be the first study to assess the association between serum thyroid hormone levels and exposure to pyrethroid insecticides in pregnant females.

**REVISED**

Ours is believed to be the first study assessing the association between serum thyroid hormone levels and exposure to pyrethroid insecticides in pregnant females.

**COMMENTS**

Notice in the additional revised example how the relative pronoun (関係代名詞) “that” followed by a pure verb form (present tense) provides even more impact.

6. **Original**

It is essential to define standards or measures, and then to compare the results against anticipated accomplishments.

**REVISED**

Defining standards or measures, and then comparing the results against anticipated accomplishments are essential.

**COMMENTS**

If “define standards or measures” and “compare the results against anticipated accomplishments” are truly essential, then uncertainty impedes the writer from communicating the intended message; thus, V-ing style is preferred.
Objectives

- to explore environmental management challenges
- to discover adaptive approach effects on stakeholders
- to investigate local and national planning implications
- to identify stakeholder roles and responsibilities