

Episode 041 – Grammar

Infinitive constructions with "zu"

The infinitive is the most basic form of a verb. It is composed of the verb stem and the ending "en" or "n". You've already seen this form when you learned about the modal verbs.

Example:

*Harry soll sein Zimmer **putzen**.*

You'll often see the infinitive form in connection with the word "zu". This is called an infinitive construction that is usually accompanied by other words or groups of words. These constructions refer back to a word in the independent clause. They have no conjugated verb or subject of their own. The subject derives from the independent clause. The "zu" + infinitive verb comes at the end of the subordinate clause and the two words are usually written separately.

Example:

***Harry Walkott** hat keine Lust, das Zimmer **zu mieten**.*

*Heute ist **Tom** an der Reihe, das Geschirr **zu spülen**.*

Not all main and dependent clauses can be given an infinitive construction. There are certain expressions that make the additional phrase possible, for example:

1. "haben" + noun

*Ich **habe kein Interesse**, das Zimmer **zu mieten**.*

*Tom **hat die Aufgabe**, das Bad **zu putzen**.*

Harry – gefangen in der Zeit

Begleitmaterialien

2. Impersonal expressions

Es ist wichtig, das Experiment **zu stoppen**.

Es ist schön, in Deutschland **zu sein**.

3. The verb "helfen"

Ich will **helfen**, das Experiment **zu stoppen**.

Using infinitive constructions with separable verbs

Some verbs have a prefix that can be separated from the conjugated form of the verb. These are called **separable verbs**.

To use the infinitive construction with separable verbs, the "zu" comes between the verb and its prefix and all the elements - prefix + "zu" + infinitive - are written together as one word.

Examples:

ein|kaufen:

Tom **kauft ein**. – Tom hat die Aufgabe, **einzu kaufen**.

runter|bringen:

Tom **bringt** den Müll nicht **runter**. – Tom hat kein Interesse, den Müll **runter zu bringen**.

Comma placement

The infinitive phrase is often separated from the independent clause by a comma. But that's not mandatory. You can leave it out if the infinitive construction is especially short.

Examples:

eher ohne Komma: Harry hilft(,) zu putzen. (= better without a comma)

eher mit Komma: Harry hilft, das Bad zu putzen. (= better with a comma)