

1 Preliminaries

1.1 Matters of form and function

■ Non-finite vs finite

Non-finite clauses are distinguished from finites largely but not wholly by the inflectional form of the verb. Clauses whose verb is a gerund-participle or past participle are always non-finite, and those whose verb is a preterite or present tense form (or irrealis *were*) are always finite: only the plain form appears in both classes of clause (Ch. 3, §1.8). Of the three main syntactic constructions having a plain-form verb, two are finite and one non-finite:

[1]	i	IMPERATIVE	<i>Be patient.</i>	}	[finite]
	ii	SUBJUNCTIVE	<i>It's essential <u>that he be more careful.</u></i>		
	iii	INFINITIVAL	<i>It's important <u>for him to be more careful.</u></i>		[non-finite]

Infinitivals are distinguished from the two finite constructions by the following properties:

- [2]
- i Most infinitivals, apart from the complements of modal auxiliaries and supportive *do*, contain the VP subordinator *to*: this is a clear marker of the infinitival.
 - ii Unlike imperatives, they do not take auxiliary *do* in negatives, etc.: compare *Don't be late* and *It's important not to be late.*
 - iii Unlike imperatives, they are almost invariably subordinate.
 - iv Unlike subjunctives, they usually have no subject, and where there is a subject it appears in accusative (or plain) form, not nominative (compare *him* in [1iii] with *he* in [1ii]).
 - v Whereas the most common type of subjunctive construction, the mandative, takes the finite-clause subordinator *that*, the infinitival subordinator (used only when a subject is present) is *for*.

■ Form-types

On the basis of the inflectional form of the verb we distinguish three main kinds of non-finite clause: **infinitival**, **gerund-participial**, and **past-participial**. We refer to these as **form-types**. They are illustrated by the bracketed clauses of [3] (all of which are