

UNIT 58

Infinitive or -ing? (3) – be afraid, need, help

a) Be afraid to do and be afraid of -ing

I am afraid to do something = I don't want to do something because it is dangerous or the result could be unpleasant:

- The streets in this city are not safe at night. Many people are **afraid to go** out alone. (= they don't want to go out alone because it is dangerous)
- She was **afraid to tell** her parents that she had broken the neighbour's window. (= she didn't want to tell her parents because she knew they would be angry)

I am afraid of something happening = there is a possibility that something bad will happen:

- We walked along the path very carefully because it was icy and we were **afraid of falling**. (*not* 'afraid to fall')
- I don't like dogs. I'm always **afraid of being** bitten. (*not* 'afraid to be bitten')

So, you are afraid to do something because you are afraid of something happening as a result. Compare:

- The boys were afraid to **play** football in the garden because they were afraid of **breaking** a window.
- I was afraid to **stay** in the sun because I was afraid of **getting** burnt.

b) Need to do and need -ing

I need to do something = it is necessary for me to do something:

- I **need to take** more exercise.
- He **needs to work** harder.
- I don't **need to come** to the meeting, do I?

Need -ing = need to be done (so the meaning is *passive*):

- The batteries in this radio **need changing**. (= need to be changed)
- This jacket is rather dirty. It **needs cleaning**. (= needs to be cleaned)
- Do you think the grass **needs cutting**? (= needs to be cut)

c) Help

Help is followed by the infinitive with or without to:

- Everybody **helped (to) clean** up after the party.
- Can somebody **help me (to) move** this table?

But there is also an expression 'can't help doing something'. **I can't help doing something** = I can't stop myself from doing something:

- I tried to be serious but I **couldn't help laughing**.
- I'm sorry I broke the glass. Someone pushed me and I **couldn't help dropping** it.
- He is stupid but it's not his fault. He **can't help being** stupid.

UNIT 58 Exercises

58.1 In this exercise you have to make sentences with **afraid**. Read each situation and then use the words in brackets to write your sentence.

Examples: The streets are unsafe at night.

(I / afraid / go out / alone) I'm afraid to go out alone.

We walked very carefully along the icy path.

(we / afraid / fall) We were afraid of falling.

1 I don't usually carry my passport with me.

(I / afraid / lose / it)

2 The sea was very rough.

(we / afraid / go / swimming)

3 We rushed to the station.

(we / afraid / miss / our train)

4 I didn't tell Tom that I thought he had behaved foolishly.

(I / afraid / hurt / his feelings)

5 In the middle of the film there was a particularly horrifying scene.

(we / afraid / look)

6 The glasses were very full, so Ann carried them very carefully.

(she / afraid / spill / the drinks)

7 I didn't like the look of the food on my plate.

a) (I / afraid / eat / it)

b) (I / afraid / make / myself ill)

58.2 Now you have to make sentences with **need -ing**. Use the verb in brackets.

Example: This coat is rather dirty. (clean) It needs cleaning.

1 This room hasn't been painted for years. (paint) It

2 Your hair is too long. (cut) It

3 Those shoes are rather dirty. (polish) They

4 This plant hasn't been watered for some time. (water)

5 Those screws are loose. (tighten)

6 Your jeans are too long. (take up)

58.3 Put the verb into the correct form, **-ing** or **to + infinitive**.

Examples: If you want to pass your exams, you need to study (study) more.

I'm sorry I broke the glass. I couldn't help dropping (drop) it.

1 Does this job need (do) now or can I leave it until later?

2 I've got an extra bed, so when you come to stay, you won't need (bring) your sleeping bag.

3 Tom helped his mother (get) the dinner ready.

4 When he told me that everybody had made fun of him, I couldn't help (feel) sorry for him.

5 Those shirts need (iron) but you don't need (do) it now.

6 He looks so funny. When I see him, I can't help (smile).

7 The fine weather helped (make) it a very enjoyable holiday.