GERUND/INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Gerund/Infinitive constructions are constructions with a certain verb which is used in conjunction with another verb which, according to what initial verb is used, takes either a gerund or infinitive form.

For example:

a) I enjoy watching TV (“enjoy” in this case takes the gerund)
b) I decided to study Japanese (“decided” takes the infinitive)
c) Let’s go to the cinema “let’s” takes the infinitive WITHOUT “to”

Basically, there are five types of gerund/infinitive constructions:

Type 1) Verbs which only take the gerund (enjoy, be/get used to, look forward to etc.)
Type 2) Verbs which only take the infinitive (want, need, hope, decide, would like etc.)
Type 3) Verbs which take both gerund and infinitive with little or no change in meaning (like, start, begin, prefer etc.)
Type 4) Verbs which take both the gerund and the infinitive but have a radical change in meaning
   (remember, stop etc. e.g. - I stopped smoking two years ago.
   - I stopped to have a cigarette while I was driving.
   - Remember to do your homework for tomorrow.
   - I don’t remember doing my homework last night I was too drunk.)
Type 5) Verbs which take the infinitive WITHOUT “to” (let, make someone do something, would rather etc. e.g. - My parents made me study Economics.
   - Let’s have dinner out tonight.
   - I’d rather not go out tonight.)

There are almost no rules but there are some guidelines to help you:

1) If a verb has a preposition in its root (e.g. “to be/get used to, to look forward to, to be interested in, to be afraid of” etc.), then the verb following it normally goes in the gerund: I look forward to seeing you. I’m used to eating vegemite. I’m interested in studying Swahili. I got used to having dinner late.

2) The infinitive of purpose:
   - I’m studying English to get a job.
   - I travelled to England to visit the Queen.
   - I went to the party to see my best friend.
   - I saved money to buy a car.

3) Activities that are normally infinitives in Catalan or Spanish are always gerunds in English (going out, skiing, studying, cooking, doing the washing up, reading, going to the cinema etc. etc.)

4) After “before, after and without” we use the gerund and after connectors like: Despite, In spite of, Instead of, Although…