

Unit 66

See someone do and see someone doing

a Study this example situation:

Tom got into his car and drove away. You saw this. You can say:

- I **saw** Tom **get** into his car and **drive** away.

In this structure we use the *infinitive* (**get**, **drive** etc.):



Remember that we use the *infinitive* without **to**:

- I saw her **go** out. (not 'to go out')

But after a *passive* ('he **was seen**' etc.) we use **to** + infinitive:

- She **was seen to go** out.

b Now study this example situation:

Yesterday you **saw** Ann. She was waiting for a bus. You can say:

- I **saw** Ann **waiting** for a bus.

In this structure we use **-ing** (**waiting**):



c Now study the difference in meaning between the two structures:

'I saw him **do** something' = he did something (*past simple*) and I saw this. I saw the complete action from beginning to end:

- He **fell** to the ground. I saw this. → I **saw** him **fall** to the ground.
- The accident **happened**. We saw this. → We **saw** the accident **happen**.

'I saw him **doing** something' = he was doing something (*past continuous*) and I saw this. I saw him when he was in the middle of doing something. This does not mean that I saw the complete action:

- He **was walking** along the street. I saw this when I drove past in my car. → I **saw** him **walking** along the street.

The difference is not always important. Sometimes you can use either form:

- I've never seen Tom **dance**. or I've never seen Tom **dancing**.

d We use these structures especially with **see** and **hear**, and also with **watch**, **listen to**, **feel** and **notice**:

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| - I didn't hear you come in. | - I could hear it raining . |
| - She suddenly felt someone touch her on the shoulder. | - The missing boys were last seen playing near the river. |
| - Did you notice anyone go out? | - Listen to the birds singing ! |

After **smell** and **find** you can use the **-ing** structure only:

- Can you **smell** something **burning**?
- She **found** him **reading** her letters.