

Begin vs. start

We can use the verbs *begin* and *start* to mean the same thing but *begin* is more formal than *start*.

The meanings are quite similar. The main difference is that *start* is both a noun and a verb. *Begin* is only a verb, with *beginning* as its noun version.

When did you begin learning English?

The meeting didn't start until 9 pm.

We use *start*, but not *begin*, to talk about machines:

You can start a car or lawnmower.

You start any machine and you also start your bath water.

The car won't start.

Press this button to start the printer.

The lawnmower won't start. (this means that it doesn't work)

Start, but not *begin*, is used to talk about creating a new business:

She started a new restaurant and it's been going really well.

These verbs can be followed by either a *to*-infinitive or a gerund with almost no difference in meaning:

I began to learn languages when I was ten.

He began using this software three years ago.

If you are using the continuous tenses with the verbs "to start" or "to begin", followed by another verb, it is better if you use the infinitive forms and not the gerund.

I am beginning to learn karate.

"It is beginning to snow" (not "snowing", although it is also correct, it does not sound very good with the double -ing).

start a journey'

I think we ought to start at six, while the roads are empty.