



VERB PATTERNS: TRY/NEED/HELP

Try to ... and try -ing

Try to do = attempt to do, make an effort to do:

- ☐ I was very tired. I **tried to keep** my eyes open, but I couldn't.
- ☐ Please **try to be** quiet when you come home. Everyone will be asleep.

Try also means 'do something as an experiment or test'. For example:

- ☐ These cakes are delicious. You should **try one**. (= you should have one to see if you like it)
- ☐ We couldn't find anywhere to stay. We **tried** every hotel in the town, but they were all full. (= we went to every hotel to see if they had a room)

If **try** (with this meaning) is followed by a verb, we say **try -ing**:

- ☐ A: The photocopier doesn't seem to be working.
- ☐ B: **Try pressing** the green button.
(= press the green button – perhaps this will help to solve the problem)

Compare:

- ☐ I **tried to move** the table, but it was too heavy. (so I couldn't move it)
- ☐ I didn't like the way the furniture was arranged, so I **tried moving** the table to the other side of the room. But it still didn't look right, so I moved it back again.

Need to ... and need -ing

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

- ☐ I **need to take** more exercise.
- ☐ He **needs to work** harder if he wants to make progress.
- ☐ I don't **need to come** to the meeting, do I?

Something needs doing = it needs to be done:

- ☐ The batteries in the radio **need changing**.
(= they need to be changed)
- ☐ Do you think my jacket **needs cleaning**?
(= ... needs to be cleaned)
- ☐ It's a difficult problem. It **needs thinking** about very carefully. (= it needs to be thought about)



Help and can't help

You can say **help to do** or **help do** (with or without to):

- ☐ Everybody **helped to clean up** after the party. *or*
Everybody **helped clean up** ...
- ☐ Can you **help me to move** this table? *or*
Can you **help me move** ...

I can't help doing something = I can't stop myself doing it:

- ☐ I don't like him, but he has a lot of problems. I **can't help feeling** sorry for him.
- ☐ She tried to be serious, but she **couldn't help laughing**.
(= she couldn't stop herself laughing)
- ☐ I'm sorry I'm so nervous. I **can't help it**.
(= I can't help being nervous)

Make suggestions. Each time use try + one of the following suggestions:

phone his office

move the aerial

~~change the batteries~~

turn it the other way

take an aspirin

- 1 The radio isn't working. I wonder what's wrong with it.
- 2 I can't open the door. The key won't turn.
- 3 The TV picture isn't very good. What can I do about it?
- 4 I can't contact Fred. He's not at home. What shall I do?
- 5 I've got a terrible headache. I wish it would go.

Have you tried changing the batteries?

Try

Have you tried

Why don't you

Have you

For each picture, write a sentence with need(s) + one of the following verbs:

~~clean~~

cut

empty

paint

tighten



- 1 This jacket is dirty. It needs cleaning.
- 2 The room isn't very nice.
- 3 The grass is very long. It
- 4 The screws are loose.
- 5 The bin is full.

Put the verb into the correct form.

- 1 a I was very tired. I tried to keep (keep) my eyes open, but I couldn't.
- b I rang the doorbell, but there was no answer. Then I tried (knock) on the door, but there was still no answer.
- c We tried (put) the fire out but without success. We had to call the fire brigade.
- d Sue needed to borrow some money. She tried (ask) Gerry, but he was short of money too.
- e I tried (reach) the shelf, but I wasn't tall enough.
- f Please leave me alone. I'm trying (concentrate).
- 2 a I need a change. I need (go) away for a while.
- b My grandmother isn't able to look after herself any more. She needs (look) after.
- c The windows are dirty. They need (clean).
- d Your hair is getting very long. It needs (cut).
- e You don't need (iron) that shirt. It doesn't need (iron).
- 3 a They were talking very loudly. I couldn't help (overhear) what they said.
- b Can you help me (get) the dinner ready?
- c He looks so funny. Whenever I see him, I can't help (smile).
- d The fine weather helped (make) it a very enjoyable holiday.