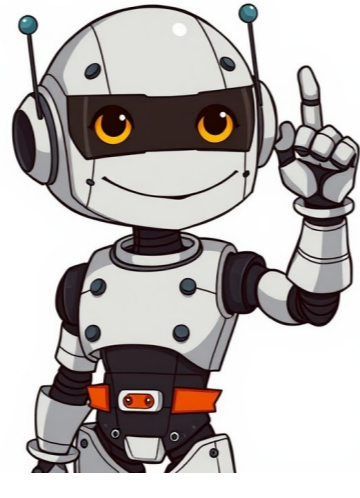


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There's two different things going on here, both of which use the word to, which is probably what's confusing you. The rule your teacher taught you applies to infinitives, in the context of sentences where there are two verbs, like I like to run. The verb following to is in the present tense, as is expected. In this case, to is known as a "particle," which is basically a word that doesn't fit into nice grammatical categories, but has some meaning. I like to running. Is not correct. However, what's happening here is that to is a preposition connected to the adverb forward, which is modifying looking. You look forward to nouns. These sentences are all acceptable: I look forward to my wedding. I'm looking forward to the weekend. I was looking forward to this weekend, but I got sick. So in this case, you have to use a gerund, the noun form of a verb following forward to. In English, the gerund is identical to the present progressive, so you get sentences like I look forward to seeing you. I look forward to meeting you. I'm looking forward to dogsledging this winter. Each of these sentences are acceptable, and use a gerund (verbal noun). You can't use other forms of the verb after the preposition to, you can't say: I'm looking forward to see you. I'm looking forward to saw you. Normally, "see" used both visually and for understanding is treated as a state verb, unless emphasizing an active, ongoing sense (as Andrew noted). However, I'm seeing two interpretations which are perfectly acceptable in correct English. These may not match the originally intent in the argument, but they're acceptable. Firstly, "see" can mean to determine something. "I'll see who's at the door, and I'll see whether they're here about the car." Now consider the following exchange: Why are you looking at my wiring diagram? I'm seeing what exactly you're trying to do here. (You can also say "exactly what".) Secondly, we sometimes inject a continuous aspect to emphasize something in process, as in "After a week of living here, I'm understanding why my neighbors hate it.". Therefore: Maybe you don't understand what exactly it is I'm trying to do. Just a minute... I think I'm seeing what exactly you're trying to do here. (This sounds more natural when "seeing" is emphasized.) There is a difference between the use of the simple present and present continuous. Generally, we use the simple present when talking about facts, or things that we do habitually, rather than actions that are currently happening/ongoing. We use the present continuous for the latter. However, in the context of your sentence, the end of the sentence which reads "a couple of times a month" already implies that this is a habitual thing. Therefore you could use either of these constructions in this particular example. I think the difference, if there is one, is very subtle. I'm a native English speaker and see no problems with either of these. The context is really important here. Yes, they are both grammatical, and have very similar meanings, even though their structures are radically different. (Two minor corrections, which don't affect what you are asking about: "walked in his direction", and the idiom is for dear life. Alternatively, you could say "for his life") In "On seeing that ...., he turned", the initial clause is a prepositional phrase locating the action in time. It is functionally equivalent to "After lunch" or "at three o'clock". It modifies the whole predicate. In the second sentence, "Seeing that ...., he turned", the initial clause is either an adjectival clause modifying "he", or possibly an absolute clause modifying the whole sentence. But it may be doing more than specifying the time - it might, for example, imply causation or motivation. The other three sentences are a bit more complicated. I find them all a bit unnatural. In the first one, "He got up from his seat, and walked towards her, seeing that she had arrived", I find it so unnatural in this sense that for me a different, idiomatic, use of 'seeing that' appears: this means 'even though', or 'because'. So the primary reading of that to me is something like "Because she had arrived, he got up ...", with an implication that he didn't want to, or wasn't ready to, but felt obliged to because she had made the effort, or something like that. The last two are fine, but as I say they feel a bit unnatural to me. I find the last one, with the comma, slightly better. As far as I know it's ungrammatical to use the verb form "seeing" when perception is involved, like so: I'm seeing a plane in the sky! However, I've noticed that it's still used in certain instances. For example: I think that explains why recently I've been seeing a chicken in our yard. Seeing the mistake, she corrected it immediately. Under what circumstances it is grammatical or acceptable to use "seeing"? 4 There is a slight difference between these two questions, but it's not the typical difference between present and present progressive tenses. It's more about how long the seeing has been taking place. "What do you see?" implies that the seeing just started. If you poke your head over a fence, your short friend might ask you, "What do you see?" And you'd say, "The batter just struck out." "What are you seeing?" implies that the seeing has been occurring for a while. For that reason, it's much less common. If you've been spying on someone with binoculars, your spy buddy might ask you, "What are you seeing?" And you might say, "It looks like she's turning a knob. It might be a safe. She's been playing with it for 2 minutes." The general "rule" is that with stative verbs—verbs which express a state rather than an event, such as know, love, see—English doesn't use progressive constructions. This is because the function of the progressive is to 'recategorize' a non-stative verb as stative. When you say I was writing my paper instead of I wrote my paper, what you are doing is getting "inside" the event, looking at a time when you were in a state of writing. With stative verbs, this is unnecessary. The progressive construction doesn't add any meaning. I see him means, usually, exactly the same thing as I am seeing him—so we use the simpler form, saw. But language evolves, and people discover new uses for existing forms. Over the last century or so English has developed two sorts of new use for progressive statives: to express new meanings — When we say John is being a jerk, we don't mean John is a jerk, we mean John is behaving like a jerk. When we say John is seeing Mary, we don't mean John perceives Mary, we mean John is dating Mary, to express change of state (or potential change of state) — With see, for instance, you might hear We're seeing more and more students arrive in college without adequate knowledge of grammar. This emphasizes the fact that they used to be very few such students, but now there are many: there has been a change of state, not in their 'seeing' but in what they see. Thus, you would ordinarily use see to talk about what you see on your computer screen. But if you are talking to a tech support person, describing what you don't understand or you wish would change, the two of you might very well use seeing: "Click the 'Save As' button ... now, what are you seeing?" or "OMG, I'm seeing the Blue Screen of Death!" It felt really nice seeing all the things fall together into place. Vs It felt really nice to see all the things fall together into place. Is this just an infinite-gerund thing? Or are the meanings of the two sentences different? 1 Verbs of sensation or inner state are usually used in the present simple, as you say. But they can be used in the continuous, putting emphasis on the fact that the seeing (or whatever) is going on right at this moment. Often (but not always) there is an implication that it has not been going on up to that moment, or will not be going on after. So, in the example, he could have asked "How many of that girl can you see?" (more idiomatic than "do you see", but that's a different issue). But the question "How many of that girl are you seeing?" puts emphasis on the fact that it is seeing at that moment that he is talking about. This suggests that it is something remarkable (as it is). Monica thinks he's drunk ("hammered"), and perhaps he too is doubting his own sight: perhaps he's thinking "at this moment I can see seven of her. Perhaps in a moment my eyesight will go back to normal and I'll only see one". [All the replies about the use of "seeing somebody" to mean "dating" are correct, but I don't think they apply in this case]

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