Recognize a gerund when you find one.

Every gerund, without exception, ends in *ing*. Gerunds are not, however, easy to identify. The problem is that all present *participles* also end in *ing*.

So what is the difference?

Gerunds function as *nouns*. Thus, gerunds will be *subjects, subject complements, direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions*.

Present participles, on the other hand, complete progressive verbs or act as *modifiers*.

Read these examples of gerunds:

Since Francisco was five years old, *swimming* has been his passion.

*Swimming* = subject of the linking verb *has been*.

Francisco’s first love is *swimming*.

*Swimming* = subject complement of the linking verb *is*.

Francisco enjoys *swimming* more than spending time with his girlfriend Diana.

*Swimming* = direct object of the action verb *enjoys*.

Francisco gives *swimming* all his energy and time.

*Swimming* = indirect object of the action verb *gives*.

When Francisco wore dive fins to class, everyone knew that he was devoted to *swimming*.

*Swimming* = object of the preposition *to*.

These *ing* words, on the other hand, are examples of *present participles*:
One day last summer, Francisco and his coach were swimming at Daytona Beach.

Swimming = present participle completing the past progressive verb were swimming.

A great white shark ate Francisco’s swimming coach.

Swimming = present participle describing coach.

Now Francisco practices his sport in safe swimming pools.

Swimming = present participle describing pools.