

THE GERUND PHRASE

Recognize a gerund phrase when you find one.

A gerund phrase will begin with a **gerund**, an *ing* word, and will include **modifiers** and/or **objects**. Gerund phrases, which always function as **nouns**, will be **subjects**, **subject complements**, or objects in the sentence.

Read these examples:

Eating ice cream on a windy day can be a messy experience if you have long, untamed hair.

Eating ice cream on a windy day = subject of the **linking verb can be**.

A more disastrous activity for long-haired people is **blowing giant bubble gum bubbles with the car windows down**.

Blowing giant bubble gum bubbles with the car windows down = subject complement of the linking verb **is**.

Wild food adventures require **getting your hair cut to a short, safe length**.

Getting your hair cut to a short, safe length = **direct object** of the **action verb require**.

Do not confuse a gerund phrase with a present participle phrase.

Gerund and present **participle phrases** are easy to confuse because they both begin with an *ing* word. The difference is that a gerund phrase will always function as a **noun** while a present participle phrase functions as an **adjective**.

Consider these examples:

Jamming too much clothing into a washing machine will cause a disaster.

Jamming too much clothing into a washing machine = gerund phrase, the **subject** of the **action verb will cause**.

Jamming too much clothing into the washing machine, Aamir saved \$1.25 but had to tolerate the curious stares of other laundry patrons as his machine bucked and rumbled with the heavy load.

Jamming too much clothing into the washing machine = present participle phrase describing **Aamir**.

Bernard hates **buttering toast with a fork**.

Buttering toast with a fork = gerund phrase, the **direct object** of the action verb **hates**.

Buttering toast with a fork, Bernard vowed that he would finally wash the pile of dirty dishes in the sink.

Buttering toast with a fork = present participle phrase describing **Bernard**.

My dog's most annoying habit is **hogging the middle of the bed**.

Hogging the middle of the bed = gerund phrase, the **subject complement** of the **linking verb is**.

Last night I had to sleep on the couch because I found my dog Floyd **hogging the middle of the bed**.

Hogging the middle of the bed = present participle phrase describing **Floyd**.

