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.

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

**B 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.