Recognize a participle when you see one.

Participles come in two varieties: past and present. They are two of the five forms or principal parts that every verb has. Look at the charts below.

Regular Verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Simple Present</th>
<th>Simple Past</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
<th>Present Participle</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>giggle</td>
<td>giggle(s)</td>
<td>giggled</td>
<td>giggled</td>
<td>giggling</td>
<td>to giggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help</td>
<td>help(s)</td>
<td>helped</td>
<td>helped</td>
<td>helping</td>
<td>to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jump</td>
<td>jump(s)</td>
<td>jumped</td>
<td>jumped</td>
<td>jumping</td>
<td>to jump</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irregular Verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Simple Present</th>
<th>Simple Past</th>
<th>Past Participle</th>
<th>Present Participle</th>
<th>Infinitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bring</td>
<td>bring(s)</td>
<td>brought</td>
<td>brought</td>
<td>bringing</td>
<td>to bring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ring</td>
<td>ring(s)</td>
<td>rang</td>
<td>rung</td>
<td>ringing</td>
<td>to ring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing</td>
<td>sing(s)</td>
<td>sang</td>
<td>sung</td>
<td>singing</td>
<td>to sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swim</td>
<td>swim(s)</td>
<td>swam</td>
<td>swum</td>
<td>swimming</td>
<td>to swim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that each present participle ends in *ing*. This is the case 100 percent of the time.

On the other hand, you can see that past participles do not have a consistent ending. The past participles of all regular verbs end in *ed*; the past participles of irregular verbs, however, vary considerably. If you look at *bring* and *sing*, for example, you’ll see that their past participles—*brought* and *sung*—do not follow the same pattern even though both verbs have *ing* as the last three letters.

Consult a dictionary whenever you are unsure of a verb’s past participle form.

Know the functions of participles.

Participles have three functions in sentences. They can be components of multipart verbs, or they can function as adjectives or nouns.
Participles in Multipart Verbs

A verb can have as many as four parts. When you form multipart verbs, you use a combination of auxiliary verbs and participles. Look at the examples below:

Our pet alligator ate Mrs. Olsen’s poodle.

*Ate* = simple past tense [no participle].

With a broom, Mrs. Olsen was beating our alligator over the head in an attempt to retrieve her poodle.

*Was* = auxiliary verb; *beating* = present participle.

Our pet alligator has been stalking neighborhood pets because my brother Billy forgets to feed the poor reptile.

*Has* = auxiliary verb; *been* = past participle; *stalking* = present participle.

Our pet alligator should have been eating Gator Chow, crunchy nuggets that Billy leaves for him in a bowl.

*Should, have* = auxiliary verbs; *been* = past participle; *eating* = present participle.

Past and present participles often function as adjectives that describe nouns. Here are some examples:

The crying baby drew a long breath and sucked in a spider crouching in the corner of the crib.

Which baby? The crying baby. Which spider? The one that was crouching in the corner.

The mangled pair of sunglasses, bruised face, broken arm, and bleeding knees meant Genette had taken another spill on her mountain bike.


Participles as Nouns

Present participles can function as nouns—the subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions, and subject complements in sentences. Whenever a present participle functions as a noun, you call it a gerund.

Take a look at these examples:
Sneezing exhausts Steve, who requires eight tissues and twenty-seven Gesundheits before he is done.  
Sneezing = the subject of the verb exhausts.

Valerie hates cooking because scraping burnt gook out of pans always undermines her enjoyment of the food.

Cooking = the direct object of the verb hates.

We gave bungee jumping a chance.

Bungee jumping = indirect object of the verb gave.

Joelle bit her tongue instead of criticizing her prom date's powder blue tuxedo.

Criticizing = object of the preposition instead of.

Omar's least favorite sport is water-skiing because a bad spill once caused him to lose his swim trunks.

Water-skiing = the subject complement of the verb is.