THE PARTICIPLE

Recognize a participle when you find one.

Particiles come in two varieties: past and present. They are two of the five forms—or principal parts—that every verb has.

Consider the charts below.

**REGULAR VERBS**

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

**IRREGULAR VERBS**

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

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

Past participles, on the other hand, do not have a consistent ending. The past participles of all regular verbs end in *ed*, but the past participles of irregular verbs
vary considerably. *Bring* and *sing*, for example, have *brought* and *sung*—with wildly different endings—as past participles.

Consult a dictionary whenever you question the past participle form of an irregular verb.

**Know the functions of participles.**

Participles have three functions in sentences. They can be components of *verb phrases*, or they can function as *adjectives* or *nouns*.

**Participles in Verb Phrases**

A verb can have as many as four parts. When you form a multipart verb—a *verb phrase*—you use a combination of *auxiliary verbs* and participles.

Read these examples:

Our pet alligator ate Mrs. Olsen’s poodle.

*Ate* = simple past tense (no participle).

When we arrived, Mrs. Olsen was beating our alligator over the head with a broom.

*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.

**Participles as Adjectives**

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

The **crying** baby drew a deep 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.

Which pair of sunglasses? The **mangled** pair. Which face? The **bruised** one. Which arm? The **broken** one. Which knees? The **bleeding** ones.

**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**.

Consider these examples:

**Sneezing** exhausts Steve, who requires eight tissues and twenty-seven Gesundheits before he is done.

_Sneezing_ = subject of the action verb _exhausts._

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

_Cooking_ = direct object of the action verb _hates._

We gave **bungee jumping** a chance.

_Bungee jumping_ = indirect object of the action 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 = subject complement of the linking verb is.