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>rung</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.**

Particples 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.


**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.