

THE PARTICIPLE

Recognize a participle when you find one.

Participles 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

INFINITIVE	SIMPLE PRESENT	SIMPLE PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE	PRESENT PARTICIPLE
to giggle	giggle(s)	giggled	giggled	giggling
to help	help(s)	helped	helped	helping
to jump	jump(s)	jumped	jumped	jumping

IRREGULAR VERBS

INFINITIVE	SIMPLE PRESENT	SIMPLE PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE	PRESENT PARTICIPLE
to bring	bring(s)	brought	brought	bringing
to ring	ring(s)	rang	rung	ringing
to sing	sing(s)	sang	sung	singing
to swim	swim(s)	swam	swum	swimming

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***.

