

VERBALS

Difficulty in recognizing verbs is often encountered because certain verb forms which function partly as verbs and partly as other parts of speech are confused with sentence verbs. These forms are made from verbs but also have the function of nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. In other words, they constitute a kind of half-verb. They are called **verbals**. The three verbal forms are the *gerund*, the *participle*, and the *infinitive*.

GERUND AND GERUND PHRASES

A gerund is a verbal that **always** functions as a noun. (Verb + ing)

Running is good exercise. (Subject)

His job is buying and selling stocks. (Subject Complement)

He likes running and jumping. (Direct Object)

Choosing a career is important. (Subject)

The dancer demonstrated whirling in patterns. (Direct Object)

PARTICIPLE AND PARTICIPLE PHRASES

Participles are verb forms used as adjectives.

Present Participle

The time of the action of the present participle is the same as the time of the action of the main verb. A present participle adds *-ing* to the verb.

The shouting woman frightened the clerk.

The woman, shouting angrily, frightened the clerk.

Past Participle

The action of the past participle has already happened, but the emphasis is on the present state or condition. A past participle adds *-d*, or *-ed* unless it is an irregular verb (tear, tore, torn).

Her torn dress was long. (The verb *torn* is irregular)

Given to theatrics, the actress left the set. (The verb *given* is irregular)

The boy dressed in jeans is my brother. (The verb *dress* + ed)

INFINITIVE AND INFINITIVE PHRASES

An infinitive or infinitive phrase may function as a noun, adjective, or adverb. (to + verb)

To delay would be disastrous. [Subject (noun)]

A good citizen does not refuse to serve on a jury. [Direct object (noun)]

My desire is to get married. [Subject complement (noun)]

His wife needs more money to spend. [Adjective]

The young man ran to catch the bus. [Adverb]

VERBALS AND SENTENCE VERBS

It is important to distinguish between the use of a particular verb form and its use as a main verb in a sentence. Perhaps an illustration of the different uses of the verb form **running** will help make this distinction:

Running a candy store is fun.

(**Running** is a gerund and is the subject of the verb **is**.)

Running swiftly, he caught the bandit.

(**Running** is a participle and modifies the pronoun **he**.)

The boy is **running** down the street.

(**Is running** is the sentence verb. It is formed by using the present participle with the auxiliary verb **is**.)

It is necessary to emphasize that a **verbal** cannot take the place of a sentence verb; moreover, any group of words containing a verbal but not a sentence verb is a sentence fragment.

The boy running. (Sentence fragment)

The boy running up the steps is Charles. (Complete sentence)

To face an audience. (Sentence fragment)

To face an audience was a great effort for me. (Complete sentence)