

The Gerund

Recognize a *gerund* when you see one.

Every gerund, without exception, ends in *ing*. Gerunds are not, however, all that easy to identify. The problem is that all present participles also end in *ing*. What is the difference?

Gerunds function as nouns. Thus, gerunds will be subjects, subject complements, direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions.

Present participles, on the other hand, complete progressive verbs or act as modifiers.

Read these examples of gerunds:

Since Francisco was five years old, **swimming** has been his passion.

Swimming = subject of the verb *has been*.

Francisco's first love is **swimming**.

Swimming = subject complement of the verb *is*.

Francisco enjoys **swimming** more than spending time with his girlfriend Diana.

Swimming = direct object of the verb *enjoys*.

Francisco gives **swimming** all of his energy and time.

Swimming = indirect object of the verb *gives*.

When Francisco wore dive fins to class, everyone knew that he was devoted to **swimming**.

Swimming = object of the preposition *to*.

These *ing* words are examples of *present participles*:

One day last summer, Francisco and his coach were **swimming** at Daytona Beach.

Swimming = present participle completing the past progressive verb *were swimming*.

A Great White shark ate Francisco's **swimming** coach.

Swimming = present participle modifying **coach**.

Now Francisco practices his sport in safe **swimming** pools.

Swimming = present participle modifying **pools**.



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The Gerund Phrase

Recognize a *gerund phrase* when you see one.

A gerund phrase will begin with a gerund, an *ing* word, and will include other modifiers and/or objects. Gerund phrases always function as nouns, so they will be subjects, subject complements, or objects in the sentence. Read these examples:

Eating ice cream on a windy day can be a messy experience if you have long, untamed hair.

Eating ice cream on a windy day = subject of the verb *can be*.

A more disastrous activity for long-haired people is ***blowing giant bubble gum bubbles with the car windows down***.

Blowing giant bubble gum bubbles with the car windows down = subject complement of the verb *is*.

Wild food adventures require ***getting your hair cut to a short, safe length***.

Getting your hair cut to a short, safe length = direct object of the verb *require*.

Don't mistake a gerund phrase for a present participle phrase.

Gerund and present participle phrases are easy to confuse because they both begin with an *ing* word. The difference is that a gerund phrase will always function as a noun while a present participle phrase describes another word in the sentence. Check out these examples:

Jamming too much clothing into a washing machine will result in disaster.

Jamming too much clothing into a washing machine = gerund phrase, the subject of the verb *will result*.

Jamming too much clothing into the washing machine, Aamir saved \$1.25 but had to tolerate the curious stares of other laundry patrons as his machine bucked and rumbled with the heavy load.

Jamming too much clothing into the washing machine = present participle phrase describing *Aamir*.

Bernard hates ***buttering toast with a fork***.

Buttering toast with a fork = gerund phrase, the direct object of the verb *hates*.

Buttering toast with a fork, Bernard vowed that he would finally wash the week's worth of dirty dishes piled in the sink.

Buttering toast with a fork = present participle phrase describing ***Bernard***.

My dog's most annoying habit is ***hogging the middle of the bed***.

Hogging the middle of the bed = gerund phrase, the subject complement of the linking verb *is*.

Last night I had to sleep on the couch because I found my dog Floyd ***hogging the middle of the bed***.

Hogging the middle of the bed = present participle phrase describing ***Floyd***.



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Lesson 20

Gerunds and Gerund Phrases

A **gerund** is a verb form ending in *-ing* that is used as a noun.

Sewing has never interested me.

A **gerund phrase** is a gerund with any complements or modifiers needed to complete its meaning.

Her enthusiastic cheering drew people from yards away.

Moving the chair was not easy.

► **Exercise 1** Circle the gerund or gerund phrase in each sentence.

Running for class president requires a lot of work.

1. I like eating healthful foods.
2. Recycling gives our family a sense of accomplishment.
3. Quitting is almost never the best solution.
4. Cheryl's delicious cooking keeps her restaurant popular.
5. Leafing through photos is a good way to remember old times.
6. We enjoyed painting the barn.
7. Doing the yard work made us tired.
8. The whistling of the wind makes the house seem lonely.
9. Constant bickering was making the twins a nuisance.
10. Pacing the floors can relieve tension for some people.
11. Public speaking was the class assignment everyone feared.
12. Skating was Karen's favorite pastime.
13. The dog's loud barking made it difficult to hear the television.
14. Miranda enjoyed exploring new places.
15. His unique singing made him a good candidate for the choir.
16. My hobbies, cycling and reading, keep me busy.
17. We wanted to win, but playing a good game was just as important.
18. Her greatest hope was finding her long-lost sister.