



# IIT Madras

## BSc Degree

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**English - II**  
**(Advanced English)**  
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**Participles in English**

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## Participles in English

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Welcome to the class. Today, we are going to discuss participle construction in English sentences. As you know, a sentence is the basic unit of our conversation. We speak in sentences. We need to know the construction and function of sentences for accuracy.

Accuracy is an important aspect of learning a new language. We communicate with others, we need communicative ability in a new language, we need basic foundation for our communications, but all these things are contingent upon practicing accuracy for success and for successful implementations of what we learn.

Learning basic communication in a new language is very different from professional functioning in a new language. For us, English is not just required for basic functioning, of asking a few questions or answering a few questions. But we need to know English in a way that we can use this language in all our functional domains, including communications.

We need to express ourselves, we need to understand what others say not only what is obvious, but also in between lines. And the more impressive we sound the more impressively we communicate, we look better, we sound better and it has the desired impact. For these purposes, we need to gain accuracy, the level of accuracy in construction of a sentence.

As we know, a sentence is a basic unit and it has two parts - it has a subject and a predicate. A predicate has a verb in it, which is the most important part of a sentence. Verbs have objects in them and also, additionally, inside the predicate, we have adverbs. Then we have certain lexical categories, certain aspects in lexical categories. Then we have functional categories, and we know several parts of a sentence.

In order to move further to understand more details about the elements in a sentence, it is nice and important to know participial constructions. And for achieving these purposes, we are going to discuss what participle constructions are and how they function.

As you understand, once we know how these things function in language, that is how these things function in learning and if we understand their function, their construction in our subconscious then we can reach that level of accuracy for achieving fluency. And thus, to communicative competence and to the next level where we really achieve communicative confidence. Let us go and look at how participial constructions work and what they are.

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Examples ...

- Raju was bearing a **torn** shirt.
- The house **looked** **abandoned**.
- Raju **abandoned** the house.
- Looking** at my condition they felt sad.
- I was looking for an old book.
- Running** nose is not a good symptom.

Participles -  
[torn] [abandoned]  
adjectival  
main verb  
Looking  
Running



Six examples for you to look at on this screen and as usual, you need to pay attention to the full sentence but specifically to the elements in color, in red.

So, the first sentence says, Raju was bearing a torn shirt. The house looked abandoned. Raju abandoned the house. So please pay attention to these three sentences. And through these examples, by paying close attention to these aspects, we will see the functions and their purpose in the sentence. We are looking at participles.

So, by now, you would have figured it out that the elements in red are participles. What do they look like? Formally, in form wise, do they look familiar to you? If they do, look at their usage in the sentence. Raju was bearing a torn shirt. The house looked abandoned. How does these two words look to you? They look like a verb. So, we are talking about participles.

And we are going to derive the following, the things that I am going to write for you, we are going to derive them from these examples. So, while looking at participles, we are looking at a word 'torn'. We are looking at a verb 'abandoned'. See, these things are verbs where we are adding some element at the end of it. This is a verb which changes its complete shape. So, this is a different word.

So they are verbs, and they have some markers on them. That is one thing that we derive from these examples. When they are the verbs look at them and see if they are the main verb in the predicate. The answer is no, because in the first sentence, Raju was bearing a torn shirt, the main word of this predicate is bearing. I meant something else with this sentence, but this is a fine sentence.

But you can also use another one, 'wearing' that will be a fine sentence too. So, you can say Raju was wearing a torn shirt or this sentence is fine as well: Raju was bearing a torn shirt. That is fine. In either case, the verb that has another marker is the main verb of this sentence. This is a transitive verb and it requires an object and shirt is the object of that verb in the predicate - very clear structure.

Now, what is the function of this? The function is that they do look like verbs, but they seem like modifying this noun that is 'torn', looks like it is modifying the noun 'shirt'. In a way, we will have things like red shirt or white shirt. So, we can say, Raju was wearing a white shirt; Raju was bearing a red shirt. We can say these things. So anyway, this word looks like a verb, but it has some adjectival function.

So, remember that in mind, and when it has an adjectival function - adjectival means like adjective - adjectival functions then it is not the main verb of the sentence. These are some of the things that we gather from just these two examples. Look at this, the house looked abandoned. This is a participle where the verb is look.

But in the next sentence, Raju abandoned the house. This is not participle, this is the main verb. So, in this sentence, Raju is the subject. Abandoned, this is the predicate. In this, this is the verb and the house is the object of the verb. So and therefore, it is not adjectival here, it is the main verb. So a participle is derived from a verb and it may have adjectival function. These are the two important parts that we get from the context of their usage here.

Let us check this thing further. Looking at my condition they felt sad. Now, this is a different kind of a sentence. What is the sentence here? And what is the subject? What is the verb? And what is the predicate? Here is the sentence, in this you have, this is the predicate. So, They - subject, felt - verb and sad is a predicative adjective.

Looking at my condition - this is a clause and this is a modifier clause which has a very different function, it has elements in it, but it has a very different function, it is modifying and I want you to find out what it is modifying. But important part for us to check is this is not part of the main sentence. This is for the sentence, but this is not part of the main sentence.

By main sentence, I simply mean it is not part of the subject, it is not part of the predicate, it is not the verb, it does not have anything to do with those parts. This is a clause. Please decide what type of clause it is. Is it a relative clause? Is it a subordinate clause? Is it a clause that is part of the object in the verb? Please check what type of clause it is. And I am also

trying to answer this question by telling you it is a modifier clause. And it modifies certain things in the sentence. So, please check that part. I am leaving it here for you to figure out.

But, when we look within that clause, we see 'looking at my condition', it looks like a verb. This part is also looking like a verb. And what, looking at what? My condition. So this is a PP. My condition, looking at my condition, they felt sad. So, it is part of it, it is like a verb. So, another type of verb with this one, -ing not a verb in the sentence.

I was looking for an old book. But, if you use the same sentence here in this sentence, you see that this is part of the predicate, I is the subject, looking is the verb and old book is the object of this sentence. So, just giving you a contrasting example. In one, looking is not the verb, in the second one, looking is the main verb in the predicate.

Running nose is not a good symptom. Here, running nose is part of the subject here. But running is not the subject; it is modifying a noun here. So again, this running has modifier function, it functions like an adjective for nose.

So, we see from these six examples, that we have two types of participles. We have a participle, which has an -ing in it and we have a participle which has either -ed or some other past form of the verb. So we derived this much of information by looking at few sentences. Let us look at some more examples.

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- Verbs
- Breaking news
  - Working people
  - Sleeping tiger
- Verbs
- Baked potatoes
  - Roasted chicken
  - Fried vegetables



We hear these things as part of a sentence, as part of situation and I have tried to simplify them in presenting them for you.

Breaking news. Working people. Sleeping tiger. Baked potatoes. Roasted chicken. Fried vegetables. Don't we use these sentences? These phrases, in these phrases, please pay attention to them. Breaking, working, sleeping, what are these? These are the verbs and we do not need to spend too much time on that, in figuring them out, that we have -ing, verbs with -ing in these examples. And in these examples, we have verbs with -ed.

This is what we see. We can use them in a sentence and even without a sentence all these examples with -ing and -ed have function of adjectives to the nouns they precede. Breaking news. Working people. Sleeping tiger. Baked potatoes. Roasted chicken and Fried vegetables. I pause here and I suggest you the following.

Please pay attention to these types of constructions in your reading, in your writing and in your speech and also when you hear others speak. You will find these things appearing quite often in our sentences that we use - when we read, when we speak. And also try to make few sentences with these examples, and examples like these. That will help you practice these participle constructions.



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## Types of participles

① • Present • v + ing	<i>Functions</i>	
② • Past • v + ed		
• V1	V2	V3 [PARTICIPLE]
• Eat	Ate	<u>Eaten</u>
• Book	Booked	<u>Booked</u> - booking
<i>Pres</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
		<i>Pres Participle</i>



So we find in the total discussion so far, that there are two types of participles in English. One is a participle with v plus -ing and a participle plus v plus -ed.

Some people refer to them one as present participle and two as past participle. I want to add a footnote here, it has very little to do with either present or past. It is present and past not as tense, it is just for the purpose of identifying the forms, people probably use these terms. Otherwise, they do not have anything to do with present or past as tense.

As you probably understand by now, tense equals to time, anything that has to do with tense has to refer to time, a form like tense is not really tense. In following from that, I mean we can call v plus -ing type as present participle and v plus -ed type as past participle, but they have very little to do with either present or past.

This is an important part for you to see. And this probably happens to be the crux of the entire discussion. And if you understand this much, we are done with participles. Also because, remember, a participles has a function like an adjective or an adverb. In other words, participle never functions like the main verb of the sentence.

And when we talk about time, in a sentence, the time, information about time gets hosted on the main verb of the sentence. This is how a sentence gets computed in our subconscious, in our mind and that is how we naturally learn a language. When we learn languages that we speak as first language or speakers of English, who have learned English as their first language, this is what they learn. This is what they figure out. And we need to pay attention to the things that people figure out from normal, natural and spontaneous acquisition.



Tense comes as part of information about time on the main verb of the sentence that is part of the predicate, not the elements that refer, that look like, that has functions like adjectives or they look like in some form. I hope you get this point and you keep them separate. Nonetheless, these are the terms used in traditional literature, traditional grammar. And also, when we say present or past, we need to account for functions, not just forms, we make this distinction probably because of the following reasons.

Look at this, you must have noticed hundreds and thousands of verbs, which can have these kinds of forms and I have purposely brought only two for you to see. We have some irregular verbs where we have eat, ate, eaten. So, 'eat' is, this is V1 is probably present. And V2 is past. What is this V3? It is actually the participle form. But since it looks, they look they resemble with each other, we call them past participle.

And in contrast with this past participle, when we see some form with -ing, we call them present participle. I still wanted to underline that these have very little to do with the tense, probably nothing to do with tense, they have completely different function in a sentence.

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## Participles and Adjectives

- Participles function as adjectives. *Relative clauses*
- *Participle* Running away from difficulties must not be appreciated.
- Making portraits is certainly a good way of spending time.
- Cooked vegetables can be harmful.



We can categorically say, participle functions as adjectives, they function as adjectives just as relative clauses function as adjectives. I am only bringing this for your reference that when we say, when we have a relative clause in a sentence, it functions as adjectives. So now, we can say, a relative clause is a modifier, an adjective is a modifier and a participle is also a modifier.

So look at some more examples to see these examples closely. Where I want your attention now in these sentences is, Running away from difficulties, look at this, this is part of the subject. You have an element with -ing as part of the subject, Running away from difficulties. So, this is definitely a participle construction. Making portraits, this is participle because this is used as a modifier. Making portraits, this is also used as a modifier, is certainly a good way of spending time, look at the participle use with -ing, spending time modifying time.

Look at this one. Cooked vegetables, modifying, cooked as a participle, modifying vegetables can be harmful. You do not have to take these things literally. As I mentioned, I am using these sentences out of the context. Of course, these are grammatical sentences. They are good sentences, but I am using them out of the context without any message for retaining the focus on the points that I am trying to make.

So you do not have to read these sentences for any message. So, these are some of the participle uses in the sentence which not just look like an adjective, but they function as adjectives in a sentence.

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## Participles and Nouns (Gerund)

- Participles function as nouns.
- This is gerund.
- Swimming is fun.
- Running reduces risk of heart-attack.

[Verb + ing]  
can be used  
as a NOUN.

[Walking]



Sometimes participles also function as nouns. And when they function as noun, they are called, there is a special term in the grammar. Not a very complex thing, very simple thing to understand. But this term is called gerund. Gerund is simply a verb. It is a verb with -ing. So you have seen verbs with -ing are like participles. So, a participle form of the verb can be used a noun. And when they are used as noun, they are called gerunds.

So look at this, a very simple sentence like, Swimming is fun. Here, the word swim has an -ing, but it is a sentence. And in this sentence, we can say this is a noun and this is a predicate, Swimming is fun.

Running reduces risk of heart-attack. So, running is a simple noun, not used as an adjective for another noun. Running reduces risk of heart-attack. Or if we can say walking, so adding an -ing to a verb and using them as a noun is a very productive pattern in English. So, a participle construction used as a noun is a very productive pattern in English. And we do not need to lose focus from them. When they become noun, they do not remain verbs. And when they are used as a noun in a sentence as subject or object there has to be something else functioning as the verb.

Therefore, it is important for us to understand the basic template of a sentence. Once we understand the basic template of a sentence like subject and predicate; within the predicate, a verb; then any other element in any other form, we can look at them, find out their construction and function and we can use them in a sentence in variety of ways and also understand their function.

We can work on them, get them and we can use them for attaining accuracy and fluency, but we do not mistake them for anything else. This happens, we will get to that level when we try to see their construction from the perspective of their acquisition in our subconscious, that is subconscious computation. This will help us get to the desired goal for better fluency through accuracy and thus, achieving confidence.

So please look at these functions, these structures, these uses of nouns, verbs with -ing or verbs with -ed constructions which are the third form of the verb V3 and their functions in, when you read something, when you write something, and when you speak or hear somebody speak. A careful attention to this will make your language much better and impressive.

Thank you so much. Looking forward to a discussion on this. See you soon.

