

Participle

Definition of Participle

A participle, in [grammatical terms](#), is the form of a verb that ends either in [present participle](#), with “-ing,” or in [past participle](#), with “-ed.” The word “participle” finds its origins in the Latin word *participium*, which means “sharing, partaking, or participating.” When it combines with auxiliary verbs, it shows an aspect, voice, or tense of the verb. It also works as an independent [adjective](#) in its “-ing” form, such as in the [sentence](#), “Newport harbor lay stretched out in the distance, with the rising moon casting a long, wavering track of silver upon it” (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe), the underlined word “rising” is an independent adjective.

Types of Participle

Present Participle – Present participles express active actions and work as adjectives. They end in “-ing,” such as carrying, tapping, and sharing. For example;

I like that shining star.

A laughing girl is stronger than a complaining girl.

Here shining, laughing and complaining are the examples of present participles.

Past Participle – Past participles appear with passive actions. The past participle of regular verbs ends in “-ed,” and the past participle of irregular verbs ends in “-d,” “-n,” “-en,” or “-t,” such as spent, broken, and opened, etc. For example:

She has learned

Do not waste your time looking at a closed

Here learned and closed are examples of past participles.

Perfect Participle – A perfect participle is created by adding the word “having” to a past participle. The perfect participle demonstrates an

action that occurred in the past. It appears like this: “Having + past participle ...” For instance:

Having read a horror book, the girl rushed out of her room.

Having washed the dishes, Mary sat down to relax.

In these sentences the actions of reading and washing the dishes were completed in the past. Also, one action occurred after the other: the girl rushed out of the room *after* she read the book; and Mary relaxed *after* she washed the dishes.

Examples of Participles in Literature

Example #1: *Will in the World* (by Stephen Greenblatt)

“I believe in broken, fractured, complicated narratives, but I believe in narratives as a vehicle for truth, not simply as a form of entertainment.”

This example has used all past participles, as shown underlined: “broken,” “fractured,” and “complicated.” The past participle of the [irregular verb](#) is “broken,” while remaining are past participles of regular verbs.

Example #2: *The Farmer’s Children* (by Elizabeth Bishop)

“The new home stood beside the macadamized ‘new’ road and was high and boxlike, painted yellow with a roof of glittering tin.”

This is another example that uses past participle “painted.” This past participle is functioning as an adjective, indicating what happened in the past.

Example #3: *Christmas Gift* (by Robert Penn Warren)

“During the thunderstorm, the frightened cat hid under the bed.

ticked with a small busy sound.”

This example has used the past participles “frightened” and “painted.” Both end in “-ed,” indicating that the actions have occurred in past.

Example #4: *The Wondrous Wood Duck* (by Jack Denton Scott)

“The ducks come on swift, silent wings, gliding through the treetops as if guided by radar, twisting, turning, never touching a twig in that thick growth of trees that surrounded the lake.”

All the participles in this example are present participles, mentioning actions that are happening in present tense. They are “gliding,” “twisting,” “turning,” and “touching” as underlined.

Example #5: *The Chaste Planet* (by John Updike)

“Leaking from restaurant walls, beamed into airports as they landed and automobiles as they crashed, chiming from steeples, thundering from parade grounds, tingling through apartment walls, carried through the streets in small boxes, violating even the peace of desert and the forest, where drive-ins featured blue musical comedies...”

In this passage, there are two past participles: “beamed” and “carried.” All the other underlined words are present participles, ending in “-ing.” These include “leaking,” “chiming,” “thundering,” “tingling,” and “violating.”

Example #6 *The Old man and the Sea* (by Earnest Hemingway)

“They picked up the gear from the boat. The old man carried the mast on his shoulder and the boy carried the wooden boat with the coiled, hard-braided brown lines, the gaff and the harpoon with its shaft. They walked up the road together to the old man’s

shack and went in through its open door. The old man leaned the mast with its wrapped sail against the wall...”

Hemingway has written this entire passage in past participles, telling what happened in the past – how the old man and the boy managed to be ready for fishing.

Function of Participle

Participles play various major roles in a sentence. They function as parts of verbs or nouns or adjectives. Due to their unique features of modifying the modifiers, such as adjectives and adverbs, participles are mostly used to beautify a piece of poetry or prose. They also connect sentences with one another for coherence, and show timing of the actions.