

# Gerund

A gerund is a type of verb that ends in “-ing,” but in a [sentence](#), it functions as a noun. In fact, a gerund is a type of verbal noun in -ing form. As a gerund functions as a noun, it occupies the same position a noun occupies in a sentence, which is the position of a [subject](#). For instance, in the sentence, “Humor is laughing at what you haven’t got when you ought to have it” (*A Note on Humor*, by Langston Hughes), “Humor is laughing” takes the place of a noun, and is being explained in the rest of the sentence.

## Everyday Use of Gerund

Dreaming is my hobby during long winter holidays.

In this sentence, “dreaming” is a gerund, functioning as a noun.

Watching games does not burn calories.

In this sentence, “watching games” is a gerund [phrase](#).

Generosity is giving more, and greed is wanting more and more.

In this line, there are two underlined gerunds, both of which are serving as subject complements.

Smiling is an art of keeping people from worrying.

In this sentence, “smiling” is a gerund and working as a subject. The two other gerunds, “keeping” and “worrying,” are the objects of prepositions.

She loves acting because it is like a real life for her.

In this sentence, “acting” is a gerund, functioning as a direct [object](#) of “loves.”

## Examples of Gerund in Literature

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**Example #1: *For Whom the Bells Tolls* (by Ernest Hemingway)**

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“He crossed the stream, picked a double handful, washed the muddy roots clean in the current and then sat down again beside his pack and ate the clean, cool green leaves and the crisp, peppery-tasting stalks... The two of them came scrambling down

the rock like goats. Coming out he leaned over the bowl and dipped the cup full and they all touched cup edges.”

Here “scrambling down” is working as a noun of the verb “came.”

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**Example #2: *Man and Superman* (by George Bernard Shaw)**

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“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”

In this example, there are three gerunds “being,” “complaining,” and “making.” “Being” is performing the role of a subject.

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**Example #3: *Percy and the Prophet* (by Wilkie Collins)**

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“I never believe nor disbelieve. If you will excuse my speaking frankly, I mean to observe you closely, and to decide for myself.”

In the following lines, “speaking” is a gerund form with “-ing” at the end of the word and working as a noun.

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**Example #4: *To the Lighthouse* (by Virginia Woolf)**

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“So with the lamps all put out, the moon sunk, and a thin rain drumming on the roof a downpouring of immense darkness began...Only through the rusty hinges and swollen sea-moistened woodwork certain airs, detached from the body of the wind (the house was ramshackle after all) crept round corners and ventured indoors. Almost one might imagine them, as they entered the drawing-room questioning and wondering, toying with the flap

of hanging wall-paper, asking, would it hang much longer, when would it fall?”

In this passage, “drumming,” “downpouring,” “questioning,” “wondering,” “toying,” and “hanging” are gerunds.

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#### **Example #5: *Mourning Becomes Electra* (by Eugene O’Neill)**

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“Then her mother evidently disappears in the greenhouse, for Lavinia turns her head, still oblivious to Seth and his friends, and looks off left, her attention caught by the band, the music of which, borne on a freshening breeze, has suddenly become louder... You’ll excuse me if I come out with it bluntly. I’ve lived most of my life at sea and in camps and I’m used to straight speaking.”

The author has employed two gerund forms in this passage: “freshening breeze” and “straight speaking.” Both gerunds are functioning as nouns.

### **Function of Gerund**

Unlike a noun, a gerund does not take inflections, or it does not have proper plural forms. A gerund plays multiple functions in a sentence; it works as a subject, as a [direct object](#), as a subject complement, and as an object of preposition. The most important use of a gerund is to serve as a pure verbal noun. Though it behaves like a verb, it functions like a noun. The major point in using gerunds is to give variation to different sentences in a text. This variation beautifies a piece of writing and conveys different nuances of the same words or same sentences.