

Present Participle

Definition of Present Participle

Present [participle](#) is a form of verb that uses “-ing” with the base of the word. Most of the times, it performs the function of an [adjective](#), though it also works as a verb or a [subject](#) in construction. This verb form is completely regular. It is also known as a “-ing” form, and uses the auxiliary form “be” to express a progressive aspect of the tense.

For example, in the [sentence](#), “Walking through Sherwood Forest at sunset, we could feel an air of mystery, as if the ancient trees had a story to tell, if only we could hear” (*Robin Hood’s Merry England*, by Winsoar Churchill), “walking” is a verb working as the subject of the sentence, though it is an adjective that describes the subject “we” given in the next [clause](#).

Common Use of Present Participle

The crying girl took a long breath and laid down on the couch.

“Crying” tells what girl is doing, adding to the meaning of the sentence.

Garry entered the room with a bruised face, a fractured hand, and a bleeding

Here, present participles describe the face, hand, and leg, which are injured.

Watching TV, he forgot everything else.

“Watching TV” is a participle clause, which has shortened the clause and made it clear and precise.

I really liked this bouncing ball.

The word “bouncing” is describing the ball.

She is working.

Here, the present participle “working” is informing the audience what the subject “she” is doing. Here it is working as a verb.

Difference between a Present Participle and a Gerund

Both are forms of verb. However, they function differently because a gerund is a verb serving as a noun. When the present participle plays the role of noun, it is also called a gerund. For instance:

Coughing exhausts Allen.

The present participle, on the other hand, also serves as an adjective and describes noun. For instance, in the sentence “The young laughing girl is looking beautiful,” it is working as an adjective.

Examples of Present Participles in Literature

Example #1: *Inside Cape Town* (by Joshua Hammer)

“I drive through the electric gates of a three-acre estate, passing landscaped gardens before I pull up in front of a neocolonial mansion, parking beside a Bentley, two Porsches and a Lamborghini Spyder. Moonsamy, wearing jeans and a T-shirt, is waiting for me at the door.”

All the underlined words are excellent examples of present participles. They function as adjectives and describe their respective nouns “gardens,” “Bentley,” and “jeans.”

Example #2: *A Drinking Life* (by Pete Hamill)

“And standing on the sidelines during those first games were the veterans, holding the spaldeens, bouncing them, smelling them in an almost sacramental way.”

In this example, “holding,” “bouncing,” and “smelling” are present participles, telling about their respective nouns.

Example #3: *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country* (by William Gass)

“Their hair in curlers and their heads wrapped in loud scarves, young mothers, fattish in trousers, lounge about in the speed-wash, smoking cigarettes, eating candy, drinking pop, thumbing magazines, and screaming at their children above the whir and rumble of the machines.”

In this passage, the present participles are “smoking,” “eating,” “drinking,” and “thumbing.” All of them are using “-ing” added to their base words and working as adjectives.

Example #4: *Sire* (by W.S. Merwin)

” . . . Standing

In the shoes of indecision, I hear them
Come up behind me and go on ahead of me
Wearing boots, on crutches, barefoot, they could never
Get together on any door-sill or destination— ”

There are two present participles in this example. The first one is “standing” that describes its respective nouns, and the second present participle is “wearing” that tells about the boots.

Example #5: *Pride and Prejudice* (by Jane Austen)

“He was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend... He is, indeed; but, considering the inducement.”

In this example, the first present participle “forbidding” is telling us about the “countenance.” The second one is working as a part of continuous verb form “considering.”

Function of Present Participle

The function of a present participle is to serve as an adjective, a verb, or a gerund. However, it is mostly used as a verb and an adjective to describes nouns and other verbs. Its use is more important in writing than in speaking. It also is used to combine or shorten active senses that have the same subjects or may be used after sense verbs. In addition, it can appear as a participle clause that is helpful in writing to place different kinds of information in a single sentence. When used as a gerund, it is mostly in the noun form used as a subject of a sentence.