

Past Participle

Definition of Past Participle

Past [participle](#) is the third form of a verb. In regular verbs, it is the same as the original verb. However, in irregular verbs, a past participle is a word that uses “-ed,” “-d,” and sometimes “-t” at the end of its present or first form.

The past participle uses auxiliary verbs, such as “have,” “has,” “had,” and in some cases “would have,” or “should have,” to describe the perfect or conditional aspect of the action. For example, in the [sentence](#), “Though many have tried, no one has ever yet explained away the decisive fact that science, which can do so much, cannot decide what it ought to do” (*The Measure of Man*, by Joseph Wood Krutch), the verbs “tried” and “explained” are in their past participle forms.

Difference Between Past Participle and Past

Both are grammatical forms of verbs. Past participle is one of the five verb forms, which include, [infinitive](#), simple present, simple past, past participle, and [present participle](#). It is the third form of verb and may appear in present, past, or future perfect tense. For example, in the sentence “He has taken his son to the hospital,” the [phrase](#) “has taken” is in the past participle form, as opposed to the past form “he took his son to the hospital.”

The past form, by contrast, only appears to describe what happened in the past, or in the simple past, or [past tense](#), though it also ends with “-d,” “-ed,” and “-t,” but without using auxiliary verbs. For example, “She walked to the college with her friend.”

Everyday Use of Past Participle

She has learned

Here the past participle of “learn” has combined with the auxiliary verb “has” to serve the purpose of [present perfect](#) tense.

Her dress was well stitched.

In this line, stitched is functioning as passive voice.

She has a broken

In this example, broken is functioning as an [adjective](#).

Examples of Past Participles in Literature

Example #1: *The Bluest Eye* (by Toni Morrison)

“Sunk in the grass of an empty lot on a spring Saturday, I split the stems of milkweed and thought about ants and peach pits and death and where the world went when I closed my eyes. I must have lain long in the grass, for the shadow that was in front of me when I left the house had disappeared when I went back.”

All the underlined words in this excerpt are past participles, including “sunk,” “lain,” and “disappeared.” The second and the third ones have also used auxiliary verbs “have” and “had.”

Example #2: *Leave It to Psmith* (by P.G. Wodehouse)

“All that had occurred was that Psmith, finding Mr. Cootes’s eye and pistol functioning in another direction, had sprung forward, snatched up a chair, hit the unfortunate man over the head with it, relieved him of his pistol, leaped to the mantelpiece, removed the revolver which lay there, and now, holding both weapons in an attitude of menace, was regarding him censoriously through a gleaming eyeglass.”

In this excerpt, the past participles have appeared as “occurred,” “sprung,” “snatched,” “hit,” “relieved,” “leaped,” and “removed.”

Example #3: *Notes on a Small Island: The Things That Really Make Britain*

“Frowned upon as unspeakably common by some gardeners, the gnome is often viewed as a rather crude decoration, which has not been helped by the introduction of mooning gnomes and even naked gnomes.”

Each of the underlined words are past participles of their respective verbs, as they end with “-ed.” The tense is not past, rather it is in the present perfect form.

Example #4: *The Old Man and the Sea* (by Ernest Hemingway)

“But they did not show it and they spoke politely about the current and the depths they had drifted their lines at and the steady good weather and of what they had seen. The successful fishermen of that day were already in and had butchered their marlin out and carried them laid full length across two planks ... Those who had caught sharks had taken them to the shark factory ...”

Hemingway has written this passage in past perfect tense using the past participles “drifted,” “seen,” “butchered,” “caught,” and “taken.” Each has appeared with the auxiliary verb “had,” to describe past events.

Function of Past Participle

The past participle can perform multiple functions. It can function as perfect tense, as an adjective to describe a noun, and as a passive voice. Its usage is very important in writing. Past participle is not only useful to describe an event in the near past, but also very effective in giving an impression of a just-happened event to establish credibility of the writer, as well as the event itself.