

THE DISPUTABLE DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE GERUND AND THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE

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One of the most conspicuous features of Modern English is the system of non-finite forms of the verb. Their dual grammatical nature, both verbal and nominal and their extensive usage in some predicative constructions have been described in great detail by the authors of scientific grammars. In the usage of the forms, however, there are some properties which present certain theoretical complications and which are still a matter of dispute among grammarians.

One of these complications is to differentiate such homonymous forms as the Gerund and the present participle. It must be said that this is one of the questions which do not admit a definite solution. The solution largely depends on what view we take. The traditional view is, that we have here two homonymous forms: the Gerund and the present participle.

A gerund is derived from a verb by adding the suffix -ing. The result is still a verb, and it exhibits ordinary verbal properties, such as taking objects and adverbs. Example: In football, deliberately tripping an opponent is a foul. Here the verb trip occurs in its gerund form tripping, but this tripping is still a verb: it takes the adverb deliberately and the object an opponent. However, the entire phrase deliberately tripping an opponent, because of the gerund within it, now functions as a noun phrase, in this case as the subject of the sentence. So, a gerund is still a verb, but the phrase built around it is nominal, not verbal. "Very different is a verbal noun constructed with -ing. Though derived from a verb, a verbal noun is strictly a noun, and it exhibits nominal properties . . ."

Present participles and gerunds look similar as words, and they also look similar as phrases. Again, it is the -ing verbal form that causes this problem. To clearly distinguish these, we need to consider their grammatical functions. A present participle functions as a non-finite form of a verb phrase, after verbs of

motion and position; it can be an adverb complement after these verbs; it can qualify/modify as an adjective does. In contrast, gerunds like nouns have naming roles and can occupy the place of nouns in many of their grammatical functions. Unlike nouns, they do not name persons, places, things, or events; they name actions, states, and behaviors.

Both a gerund and a present participle come from a verb, and both end in *ing*. However, each has a different function. A gerund acts like a noun, while a present participle acts like a verb or adjective.

---Surfing is fun (gerund).

---He is surfing. (past participle).

Surfing can be a gerund or a present participle.

When surfing is a gerund, it acts like a noun. It can be a subject, an object, the object of a preposition, or a subject complement.

---Surfing is a winter sport. [surfing = subject]

---I love surfing. [surfing = object]

---I am excited by surfing. [surfing = object of a preposition]

---One of most exiting sport is surfing. [surfing = subject complement]

When surfing is a present participle, it is part of a continuous verb tense.

Right now, Frank is surfing. [is surfing = present continuous]

He was surfing yesterday afternoon. [was surfing = past continuous]

Tomorrow, my friends and I are going to be surfing. [are going to be surfing = future continuous]

Unlike a gerund, a present participle can act like an adjective that modifies a noun or follows the be verb.

---What an amazing movie. I want to see it again.

The word amazing is a present participle used as an adjective to modify a noun or to follow the verb to be.

An amazing cartoon made the children laugh. [adjective + noun]

People enjoyed the amazing movie. [adjective + noun]

The movie is exciting. [be verb + adjective]

Although the term might sound foreign, the gerund is a common part of speech that most of us use every day, whether we know it or not. Here, we'll take an in-depth look at gerunds and provide you with several examples of gerunds so you'll feel comfortable using them in your writing, and so that you will be able to recognize them when you see them.

Gerunds are words that are formed with verbs but act as nouns. They're very easy to spot, since every gerund is a verb with -ing tacked to its tail. There are no exceptions to this rule.

The problem here is that present participles also end with the letters -ing. Besides being able to spot gerunds, you should be able to tell the difference between a gerund and a present participle.

Remember that gerunds are words that are formed with verbs but act as nouns. Present participles do not act as nouns. Instead, they act as modifiers or complete progressive verbs. To find gerunds in sentences, just look for a verb + ing that is used as a noun. It's that simple.

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