

Lesson 19

Participles, Participial Phrases, and Absolute Phrases

A **participle** is a verb form that can function as an adjective. Present participles always have an *-ing* ending. Past participles often end in *-ed*, but some take other forms. Many common adjectives are participles.

I tried to wash my **stained** shirt. (*Stained* is a participle that modifies the noun *shirt*.)

A **participial phrase** contains a participle plus its modifiers. Since it functions as an adjective, it can appear in various places in a sentence. When it appears at the beginning of a sentence or is nonessential, a participial phrase is set off by commas.

Stumbling over the junk, I decided to clean up the garage.
The farm, **devastated by the storm**, lay in ruins.

A past participle is sometimes used with the present participle of the helping verbs *have* and *be*.

Having studied for hours, I went for a walk. We watched the cliff **being dashed by the waves**.

► Exercise 1 Underline each participle and participial phrase.

Packing carefully, we prepared for our camping trip.

1. Yelling with all our might, we sat in the cheering section.
2. Did anyone ever tell you that you have a winning smile?
3. Feeling like a fool, I appeared from behind the curtain in a checkered costume.
4. Blushing, Estrella accepted the praise of her cycling buddies.
5. What should we do with this picked fruit?
6. The leaning buildings were knocked down by the wrecking ball.
7. Breathing hard, the runners crossed the finish line.
8. The dog, caught between the two fierce cats, fled the yard.
9. Badly injured, the accident victims were helicoptered to the trauma center.
10. Holding our breaths, we watched the hero being stalked by the villain.
11. The crumpled shipment of dishes contained many cracked items.
12. Tires screaming, the racing car rounded the track.
13. The photographer shooting the wedding focused several pictures on the smiling parents.
14. The speaker at the museum was a respected environmentalist.

15. My typing rate changed drastically due to my broken wrist.
16. Hoping for the best, we opened the basement door after the raging flood.
17. The team has finally broken its losing streak!
18. Don't forget your backpack lying behind the sofa.
19. Clutching her mother's hand, the child skated slowly over the frozen rink.
20. Slashing the vegetation ahead, the explorers ploughed through the overgrown jungle.

An **absolute phrase** consists of a noun or a pronoun that is modified by a participle or a participial phrase. It stands “absolutely” by itself, having no grammatical relation to the complete subject or the complete predicate of a sentence.

Its leaves burned off by the fire, the dead tree fell.

In some absolute phrases the participle *being* is understood rather than stated.

We hurried to the game, **our anticipation (being) high**.

► **Exercise 2** Underline each absolute phrase. Do not underline any participial phrase that is grammatically related to the rest of a sentence.

We hoped for a clear weekend, Friday being dreary.

1. Her suspicions confirmed, the police officer made the arrest.
2. Backing out of the driveway, I hit the mailbox.
3. They will take the daytime train, the landscape inviting.
4. My doubts relieved, I gained confidence as the game progressed.
5. Peering through a microscope, the scientist identified several microbes.
6. His dogs panting with exertion, Hagos took a break from his run.
7. Its shutters hanging limply in the wind, the house looked abandoned and forlorn.
8. The car rusted and worthless, I left it at the junkyard.
9. Wearing a red plaid outfit, Lydia looked like a character in a novel.
10. Everything planned in advance, the party went like clockwork.
11. We scrambled from the car, racing to the amusement park gates.
12. Moving quickly, the lion cut off the fleeing zebra.
13. My garden is dying, pesticides having been applied by mistake.
14. As the parole board met to decide the fates of several people, the prisoner was hoping for parole.