

Gerund and present participle

The gerund and the present participle have identical forms. They are both formed from verbs and end in -ing. However, they have different uses. A gerund functions like a noun. It can do everything that a noun does. A participle, on the other hand, functions like an adjective. It is mostly used to modify nouns. It is also used to make continuous tense forms.

Compare:

He kept me waiting. (Waiting – present participle)

I don't like waiting. (Here the -ing form waiting is the object of the verb like and hence it acts like a noun. It is therefore a gerund.)

After playing for an hour, he went home. (Playing – present participle)

Playing is good for health. (Here the -ing form playing is the subject of the verb is and hence it acts like a noun. It is therefore a gerund.)

Forms of gerund

Having worked for twelve hours, I felt tired. (Perfect – active)

She is angry about having been criticized. (Perfect – passive)

Everybody is desirous of being praised. (Passive)

Not knowing what to do, she started crying. (Negative)

Exercise

Say whether the -ing forms given in the following sentences are gerunds or present participles.

Gerund and present participle

1. Telling lies won't help anyone.
2. She was punished for coming late.
3. Children learn reading and writing at school.
4. Coming events cast their shadow.
5. He left the tap running.

Answers

1. Telling - gerund (subject of the verb won't)
2. Coming - gerund (object of the preposition for)
3. Reading and writing - gerund (object of the verb learn)
4. Coming - present participle (modifies the noun events)
5. Present participle - running (modifies the noun tap)