

Using gerunds in English

The gerund is a word form ending in -ing. Although gerunds are formed from verbs, they are not verbs. In fact, gerunds serve the same purpose as nouns. That means they can be the subject and object of the verb. They can also be the object of a preposition.

Study the examples given below.

Smoking is injurious to health. (Here the gerund smoking acts as the subject of the verb.)

She enjoys reading. (Here the gerund reading acts as the object of the verb.)

She is interested in acting. (Here the gerund acting acts as the object of the preposition in.)

Gerunds are considered as non-finite verbs. They can't make clauses and their form don't change when the number and person of the subject changes.

An English verb can exist in different forms. The verbs 'eat', 'drink', 'sing', 'work', 'dance' and 'write' are in their base form.

We make infinitives but putting 'to' before the base form of the verb. Examples are: to eat, to drink, to sing, to work, to dance and to write.

Both gerunds and present participles are formed by adding -ing to the verb.

Examples are: singing, dancing, working, eating, praying etc.

There is an important difference between gerunds and participles. Participles are used to form continuous tense forms. They can also act as adjectives.

I am writing. (Here the present participle 'writing' helps form the present continuous tense 'am writing'.)

Barking dogs seldom bite. (Here the present participle 'barking' acts as an adjective modifying the noun dogs.)

A gerund is never used as a verb. It acts as a noun or noun equivalent.

Trespassing is prohibited.