

The Participle

Read the following sentence

Seeing the snake the boy ran away.

Seeing is a form of the verb see and has an object, namely snake. At the same time seeing is also like an adjective because it qualifies the noun boy. It is, therefore, called a verbal adjective or participle.

The participle has two forms: the present participle and the past participle.

The present participle

The boy cried thinking that he would be punished.

I see a boy running across the field.

In the examples given above, the words in bold text are examples of present participles. As you can see all of them end in -ing. The present participle represents an action as going on or incomplete.

In the first sentence the action takes place in the past, while in the second sentence the action takes place in the present. Thus, the present participle does not indicate the present time but unfinished action.

The present participle can be used with all the tenses. The time of the action is shown by the finite verbs (cried, see) in the sentence, and not by the participle.

The past participle

Study the following examples.

Stricken with grief, she killed herself.

We saw trees laden with fruits.

Bent with old age the old man tottered along.

In the sentences given above, the words in bold text are examples of past participles. As you

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can see, the past participle usually ends in -ed, -d, -t or -en. They represent a completed action.

Now look at the following sentence:

Not having applied in time he could not get the scholarship.

Here 'having applied' is not a simple past participle. It is actually a perfect participle which represents an action as having been completed some time in the past.