

More on the uses of participles

Participles are used in absolute phrases with a noun or pronoun going before them.

God willing, we shall meet again.

The weather being rough, they cancelled the flight.

The fog having lifted, the plane took off.

Note that each of these absolute phrases can be transformed into a subordinate clause.

If God is willing, we shall meet again.

As the weather was rough, they cancelled the flight.

When the fog had lifted, the plane took off.

Note that an absolute phrase is a phrase which is linked to the sentence containing it only by meaning and intonation. It does not have a grammatical link of any kind with the rest of the sentence.

A common error in the use of participles

A participle is a verb-adjective. It should be related to a proper subject of reference. If the subject is lacking or if a wrong subject is used, the whole sentence would be wrong.

Study the following sentence:

Having bitten the boy, the farmer killed the snake.

This sentence means that it was the farmer who bit the boy and not the snake. It should, therefore, be re-written as '*The snake having bitten the boy, the farmer killed it*'.

Another example is given below:

Driving down the road, a leopard leapt out in front of me.

This sentence means that it was the leopard which was driving down the road. It should, therefore, be rewritten as '*As I was driving down the road, a leopard leapt out in front of me.*'