

What are participles?

Read the following sentence:

Hearing a loud noise, the boy woke up.

Here the word hearing qualifies the noun boy as an adjective does. It is formed from the verb hear and has an object - noise. The word hearing, therefore, has the properties of a verb and an adjective and is called a participle.

A participle is a word which is partly a verb and partly an adjective.

Note that in the example sentence given above, the phrase 'hearing a loud noise' which is introduced by a participle is called a participle phrase.

Study the following examples:

Knocking at the door, he demanded admission.

We met a girl *carrying* a basket full of vegetables.

The old woman, *thinking* all was safe, attempted to cross the road.

The italicized words in the above sentences are all examples of what are called present participles. Note that present participles end in -ing and represent an action as going on or incomplete or imperfect.

Present participles formed from transitive verbs, take objects.

Now study the following sentences:

We saw trees *laden* with fruits.

Deceived by his friends, he committed suicide.

Driven by rain, we took shelter under a tree.

The italicized words in the above sentences are all examples of what are called past participles. The past participle usually ends in -ed, -d, -t, -en or -n. It represents a completed action or state.

What are participles?

Besides the present and past participles, we have what is called a perfect participle which represents an action as completed some time in the past.

Having rested for a while, we continued our journey.

Participles are often used as simple qualifying adjectives in front of nouns.

Barking dogs seldom bite.

A rolling stone gathers no moss.

His tattered coat needs mending.

A burnt child dreads fire.

He is a learned man.

When used as an adjective, the past participle has a passive meaning.

A burnt child = a child who is burnt.

A painted doll = a doll which is painted.

When used as an adjective, the present participle has an active meaning.

A barking dog = a dog which barks

A rolling stone = a stone which rolls