

---

# The difference between the gerund and the present participle

Since the simple gerund and the present participle have the same form (verb-*ing*), sometimes it can be difficult to decide whether an *-ing* form is a gerund or a present participle.

It may be worth remembering that a gerund always functions as a noun:

Function	Example sentence
Subject	<i><b>Hiking</b> can be a relaxing and rewarding activity.</i>
Complement	<i>What I really like is <b>travelling</b> to other countries.</i>
Object of a verb	<i>Jill suggested <b>going</b> for a drink.</i>
Object of a preposition	<i>He rushed out of the room without <b>saying</b> a word.</i>
Object of a prepositional verb	<i>Could you give up <b>smoking</b>?</i>
Part of a compound noun	<i>We had no <b>drinking</b> water left.</i>

The present participle has the following functions:

Function	Example sentence
Continuous aspect	<i>I wasn't <b>listening</b>.</i> <i>What have you been <b>doing</b>?</i> <i>You must be <b>joking</b>.</i> <i>I happened to be <b>passing</b> your house.</i>
Adjective	<i>The survey revealed some <b>worrying</b> results.</i> <i>The results of the survey were/seemed <b>worrying</b>.</i>
Participle clauses	<i>The man <b>driving</b> the car was not injured.</i> <i>Tom lost his keys (while) <b>walking</b> through the park.</i> <i><b>Opening</b> the envelope, I found two concert tickets.</i> <i><b>Having</b> nothing left to do, Paula went home.</i>

Sometimes it is a matter of interpretation whether an *-ing* form is a gerund or a present participle:

***Hunting** lions can be dangerous.*

*Hunting* as a present participle functions as an adjective and describes *lions*. The sentence means:

*Lions that hunt can be dangerous.*

If *hunting* is a gerund, *lions* is its object and the sentence means:

*It can be dangerous to hunt lions.*

---

