

## Participles (-ing and -ed forms)

Participles are word forms created by adding *-ing* or *-ed* to the simple form of a verb. They can be used as present or past tense verbs or as adjectives.

**Present participle verbs** end in *-ing* and are often used with *helping verbs* in continuous tenses, meaning the action is ongoing for a set period of time or at the moment of some other action.

I *am* **taking** two liberal arts courses this semester.

I *was* **walking** to class when you called.

**Past participle verbs** end in *-ed* and are often used with *helping verbs* in perfect tenses, meaning the action is completed at the indicated time.

Susan *had* **planned** a surprise party for the weekend I went to New York.

You *will have* **finished** five projects before I finish one.

**Participle adjectives** use the meaning of the verb to describe, define, or identify a noun. In these sentences, the participle tense does not apply. Participle adjectives most often appear in front of the nouns they describe.

This semester, I'll take my first **painting** class.

My roommate has a beautiful collection of **painted** ceramics.

All the **bored** campers wanted to take a hike in the woods.

I didn't expect to have to fill out all this **boring** paperwork.

This book tells the most **exciting** story I've ever read.

You could hear all the **excited** museumgoers from two blocks away.

Sometimes, the participle adjective can appear immediately after the noun it describes:

The funds **remaining** will be used to purchase snacks for our party.

I agree with the people **protesting**.

When a sentence describes the subject using a form of *to be*, a participle adjective can appear after that *linking verb*:

Conversations with my grandmother *were* always **enlightening**.

After seeing the grad thesis exhibition, I *am* **inspired** to start a new project.

While all participle adjectives turn verbs into describing words, there is a difference in meaning between the *-ing* and *-ed* forms (which can be easily mixed up—especially for English language learners). The distinction is the difference between cause and effect, source and recipient.

This assignment is **confusing**.

I will ask my professor questions about this **confusing** assignment.

The assignment is being described as the source of uncertainty. The *-ing* form is related to cause.

I am **confused** about this assignment.

My **confused** classmates and I will ask the professor some questions.

The speaker and their classmates are being described as the recipients of uncertainty. The *-ed* form is related to effect.

I am taking two liberal arts courses this semester.

I was walking to class when you called.

**Participle clauses** have a past or present participle that helps to describe or define part of the main clause or whole sentence.

*Feeling unwell*, Jin went to bed.

The *participle clause* here explains the continuous condition in which Jin went to bed.

The people *waiting in line* seem excited for the movie.

The *participle clause* here defines which people seem excited.

Exercise: Choose the correct participle form (-ing or -ed) of the verb shown in brackets. Pay careful attention to the active verbs in the sentence as well as cause and effect, source and recipient, active and passive.

1. There is a purple vase [**to display**] in the front entrance.
  
2. You seemed so [**to distract**] in class today. Is everything okay?
  
3. The textiles department threw a party for all [**to graduate**] seniors last night.
  
4. Her work explores feelings of insignificance and alienation [**to result**] from her identity as a woman and a foreigner.
  
5. He is not [**to interest**] in the types of internships they offer.
  
6. I'm [**to run**] in a marathon tomorrow, so I'll need to be [**to rest**].
  
7. Out of all the presentations, why is the most [**to bore**] one also the longest?
  
8. I received an [**to overwhelm**] number of compliments on my latest sculpture.
  
9. That shop sold me a [**to break**] television.
  
10. While we waited for the cab, the pack of vultures [**to circle**] overhead made me nervous.

Answers:

1. **Displayed:** describing the vase as receiving the action of display — some person is displaying it
  
2. **Distracted:** describing the listener, “you,” as the recipient of distraction; if **distracting**, the listener would have been disrupting class and the speaker might be less concerned and more annoyed
  
3. **Graduating:** describing the seniors as performing the act of completing school
  
4. **Resulting:** describing the feelings as performing the action; tricky because of the meaning of the verb identifies cause/source — try replacing it with a similar verb, like [to come]
  
5. **Interested:** describing him as (not) receiving the sense of interest — the internships are (not) performing the act of interesting
  
6. **Running:** present participle verb, **Rested:** describing the speaker as receiving the rest
  
7. **Boring:** describing this presentation as performing the act of boring
  
8. **Overwhelming:** describing the number of compliments as the cause of the action
  
9. **Broken:** past participle of to break describing the television as receiving the effects of breaking (watch out for irregular forms, like tie/tying/tied, sleep/sleeping/slept, burn/burning/burnt)
  
10. **Circling:** describing the vultures as performing the action/motion