

Gerunds

Summary: This handout provides a detailed overview (including descriptions and examples) of gerunds, participles, and infinitives.

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A gerund is a verbal that ends in *-ing* and functions as a noun. The term *verbal* indicates that a gerund, like the other two kinds of verbals, is based on a verb and therefore expresses action or a state of being. However, since a gerund functions as a noun, it occupies some positions in a sentence that a noun ordinarily would, for example: subject, direct object, subject complement, and object of preposition.

Gerund as subject:

- Traveling might satisfy your desire for new experiences. (Traveling is the gerund.)
- The study abroad program might satisfy your desire for new experiences. (The gerund has been removed.)

Gerund as direct object:

- They do not appreciate my singing. (The gerund is singing.)
- They do not appreciate my assistance. (The gerund has been removed.)

Gerund as subject complement:

- My cat's favorite activity is sleeping. (The gerund is sleeping.)
- My cat's favorite food is salmon. (The gerund has been removed.)

Gerund as object of preposition:

- The police arrested him for speeding. (The gerund is speeding.)
- The police arrested him for criminal activity. (The gerund has been removed.)

A Gerund Phrase is a group of words consisting of a gerund and the modifier(s) and/or (pro)noun(s) or noun phrase(s) that function as the direct object(s), indirect object(s), or complement(s) of the action or state expressed in the gerund, such as:

The gerund phrase functions as the subject of the sentence.

Finding a needle in a haystack would be easier than what we're trying to do.

Finding (gerund)
a needle (direct object of action expressed in gerund)
in a haystack (prepositional phrase as adverb)

The gerund phrase functions as the direct object of the verb appreciate.

I hope that you appreciate my offering you this opportunity.

my (possessive pronoun adjective form, modifying the gerund)

offering (gerund)

you (indirect object of action expressed in gerund)

this opportunity (direct object of action expressed in gerund)

The gerund phrase functions as the subject complement.

Tom's favorite tactic has been jabbering away to his constituents.

jabbering away to (gerund)

his constituents (direct object of action expressed in gerund)

The gerund phrase functions as the object of the preposition for.

You might get in trouble for faking an illness to avoid work.

faking (gerund)

an illness (direct object of action expressed in gerund)

to avoid work (infinitive phrase as adverb)

The gerund phrase functions as the subject of the sentence.

Being the boss made Jeff feel uneasy.

Being (gerund)

the boss (subject complement for Jeff, via state of being expressed in gerund)

Punctuation

A gerund virtually never requires any punctuation with it.