

INFINITIVES, GERUNDS, AND PARTICIPLES

How to use verbs that act as nouns or modifiers

Infinitives, gerunds, and participles (or “verbals”) are words formed from verbs that act as **nouns** or **modifiers**. A verbal is not limited by number or person; it has no tense, no mood, and no voice.

INFINITIVE: An infinitive is the verb's root form, formed by adding *to* in front of the verb:
to be, to hope, to begin, to go, to sleep, etc.

GERUND: A gerund (which looks like the **present participle** of a verb) is formed by adding *ing* to the end of the verb:
being, hoping, learning, going, sleeping, etc.

PARTICIPLE: A participle (which looks like the **past participle** of that verb) is formed by adding *ed* to the end of regular verbs. Note these irregular participles:
written, sung, caught, forgotten, frozen, etc.

HOW THEY ARE USED:

The **INFINITIVE** is used as a noun or as a modifier and is often used to show a completed act, a reason, a purpose or a goal.

Nouns: To choose between two options is hard.
To err is human.

Modifiers: I need a certificate to prove I was sick.
I plan to become a lawyer and to have three children.

A **GERUND** is used as a noun or a modifier and is often used to show duration or an action in progress.

Nouns: Waiting for my husband irritates my nerves.
Thinking is harder than acting.

Modifiers: She spoke with the young men waiting with her for the bus.
Hoping for a raise, I will speak to my boss today

A **PARTICIPLE**, used as a modifier, is often used to describe, identify, or define a noun or to show a completed action.

The children believe that the deserted house is haunted.
Though finished, your essay is not yet submitted.
Once started, your work will go quickly.

INFINITIVES, GERUNDS, PARTICIPLES are often used to introduce **modifying phrases**.

- To succeed in life, one must have a goal.
- Anticipating rain, Mary brought an umbrella.
- Destroyed in an avalanche, the log cabin was rebuilt.

For more help, contact the Academic Skills Centre.