A **Participle** is a verbal — a verb form that looks like a verb but does not act as the verb in a sentence. A participle usually acts as an adjective to modify a noun or pronoun.

A Participle is a form of a verb that can function as part of a verb or adverb phase, or independently as an adjective or an adverb. A participle ends in **-ed** or **-ing** (except for some irregular verbs). A participle is formed from a verb and modifies a noun, noun phrase,
pronoun, verb, or verb phrase. Most often, a participle functions as an adjective.

Consider the following examples:

- to run – running – I saw a running man.

In this example of a participle, the verb ‘to run’ is used. ‘Running’ becomes the participle as it is used as an adjective to describe ‘man.’ What kind of man is he? A running man.

- ride – riding – I saw a boy riding a bicycle.

In this example the whole phrase ‘riding a bicycle’ acts like an adjective. It describes the noun ‘boy’. The word ‘riding’ acts also like a verb, because it has ‘bicycle’ as its object. The phrase ‘riding a bicycle’ is an action-based description of the boy.

Types of Participles

There are two types of participles in English: past and present.

Present Participle

Present Participles are forms of verbs that express a non-completed or continuing action. They end in ‘-ing’ and are used with auxiliary verbs ‘be’ and ‘have’ to make continuous tenses, such as Present Continuous, Present Perfect Continuous, etc.

- It is raining all day long. (‘be’ + raining)
- The choir was singing beautiful chants. (‘be’ + singing)
- Cindy and Shaun have been spending their vacation at the sea. (‘have’ + spending)

How to form Present Participle

To form the Present Participle we add ‘-ing’ to the base form of the verb:

- to play → playing
• to hide → hiding
• to swim → swimming

Note: **Spelling rules for verbs when adding ‘-ing’.**

1. For verbs with silent ‘-e’ at the end, change ‘-e’ to ‘-ing’:
   - to choose → choosing
   - to glide → gliding

2. For verbs with ‘-ie’ at the end, change ‘-ie’ to ‘-ying’:
   - to tie → tying
   - to lie → lying

3. For verbs with ‘consonant + vowel + consonant’ at the end and final syllable stressed, double the last consonant (except for ‘-x’ and ‘-w’) and add ‘-ing’:
   - to for’get → forgetting
   - to ‘swim → swimming

Present Participle vs Gerund

When *-ing* forms are used as verbs, adjectives or adverbs, they are called Present Participles. They can refer to present, past or future.

When *-ing* forms are used like **nouns**, they are called **gerunds**.

Compare:

• **He was swimming** when I came. (Here, ‘swimming’ means an action and acts like a verb)

• **Swimming** is my favorite sport. (Here, ‘swimming’ acts like a noun)

Past Participle

Past Participles are forms of verbs that express a **completed** action. They end in ‘*-ed*’ except for **irregular verbs** and are used with auxiliary verb ‘have’ to form perfect tenses such as **Present Perfect**, **Past Perfect**, etc., and **Passive voice**.
• I have passed the exam and I am very happy. (‘have’ + passed)
• Jane had planned to take the kids to the beach, but the weather changed. (‘have’ + planned)
• We have finished our work for today. (‘have’ + finished)

How to form Past Participle

In most cases (for regular verbs), to form the Past Participle we add ‘-ed’ to the base form of the verb:

• to listen → listened
• to like → liked
• to drop → dropped

Note: Spelling rules for verbs when adding ‘-ed’.

a) For regular verbs ending in ‘-e’, add ‘-d’:
- To live → John lived in Brazil.
- To close → She closed the door.

b) For regular verbs ending in one consonant + ‘-y’, change the ‘-y’ to ‘-ied’:
- To study → They studied German.
- To try → I tried to be kind.

c) For regular verbs that end in one vowel + one consonant, double the consonant and add ‘-ed’:
- To stop → They stopped the car.
- To plan → Nick planned a business trip.

d) We do not double the consonants ‘y’ or ‘w’:
- To play → She played piano.
- To row → He rowed 3km yesterday.

e) We do not double the consonant when the last syllable is not stressed:
- To listen → I listened to the radio.
- To visit → Margaret visited her mother on Tuesday.
Some common verbs in English have **irregular** Past Participle forms:

- I don’t **feel** (base form) quite well today. – I haven’t **felt** (past participle form) very well for over a week now.
- Helen has **gone** to Madrid. She will be back next Sunday.
- Mary has **done** her homework perfectly, her mam’s glad.
- The police have **found** the suspect within three hours.

### When to use Participles

#### Present Participle

Present participles are used as adjectives and to create Continuous (Present, Past, and Future) verb tenses.

- Adjectives
  - **barking** dog
  - **flowering** tree
- Verb Tenses
  - I am **thinking**. (present continuous)
  - I was **driving**. (past continuous)

#### Past Participle

Past participles are used as adjectives and to create Perfect verb tenses (Present, Past, and Future) and the **Passive voice**.

- Adjectives
  - **spotted** dog
  - **broken** vase
- Verb Tenses & Voice
  - I had **left**. (past perfect)
  - I have **visited**. (present perfect)
  - The lesson was **finished**. (passive voice)
Here’s a good video from EngVid explaining how to use participles in a sentence:

See also:

Gerund: Overview

Verbs: The Infinitive

Irregular Verbs