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.

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A **Participle** is a form of a verb that can function as part of a **verb** or **adverb** phase, or independently as a **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**, **adjective**, or **adverb**.

What is a Participle?

**working man** (adjective)
- **broken heart** (verb)
- **asking me** (adverb)
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