

Gerunds

APSU Writing Center Handout

Gerunds

A gerund is a verb form that ends in -ing and functions as a noun in a sentence. Gerunds express actions or states of being, even though they are based on verbs.

- **Examples:** walking, running, swimming, voting, traveling, hiking, amusing, etc.

Gerund Phrase

A gerund phrase includes a gerund plus any modifiers, pronouns, or noun phrases that complete its meaning. Gerund phrases function as nouns (subjects, objects, or complements) and do not require punctuation at the end.

- **Example:** Playing Apples to Apples is a great way to spend an evening.
- **Gerund:** Playing
- **Clarifying Information:** Apples to Apples

Gerunds as the Subject

A gerund can act as the subject of a sentence.

- **Example:** Swimming is my favorite activity.
- **Gerund:** swimming

Gerunds as the Direct Object

A direct object receives the action of the verb. When a gerund functions as the direct object, it names the activity that receives the action.

- **Example:** The neighbors do not like my dog barking.
- **Gerund:** barking

Gerunds as the Subject Complement

A subject complement follows a linking verb and identifies or describes the subject.

- **Example:** Her biggest challenge is learning.
- **Gerund:** learning

Gerunds as the Object of a Preposition

When a preposition is followed by a gerund, the gerund functions as the object of the preposition.

- **Example:** He got in trouble for avoiding his work and not completing it.
- **Gerund Phrase:** avoiding his work and not completing it

Preposition

A preposition is a word or group of words used before a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to show direction, time, place, location, or relationship.

- **Examples:** in, at, on, of, to, by, for, after, before, with, about.

Object of a Preposition

The object of a preposition is the noun, pronoun, or gerund that completes the meaning of the prepositional phrase.

- **Example:** She is interested in learning French.
- **Preposition:** in
- **Object of Preposition:** learning French

Infinitives

An infinitive is the base form of a verb preceded by to. Infinitives can function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

- **Example:** To vote is a legal obligation.
- **Subject:** to vote
- **Complement:** a legal obligation

Common Verbs Followed Only by a Gerund

Some verbs are always followed by a gerund, not an infinitive.

- **Example:** He enjoys reading historical novels.
- **Examples:** admit, avoid, consider, delay, deny, enjoy, finish, imagine, keep, practice, etc.

Common Verbs Followed Only by an Infinitive

Some verbs are always followed by an infinitive.

- **Example:** They plan to visit next month.
- **Examples:** agree, decide, expect, hope, learn, need, plan, promise, refuse. etc.

Dangling Elements

A dangling element is a verbal phrase (a participle, gerund, or infinitive) that appears in a sentence without a clear or explicit subject.

How to Fix Dangling Elements

Use the noun or pronoun that the dangling element refers to as the subject of the main clause.

Turn the dangling element into a full clause with its own subject.

References

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