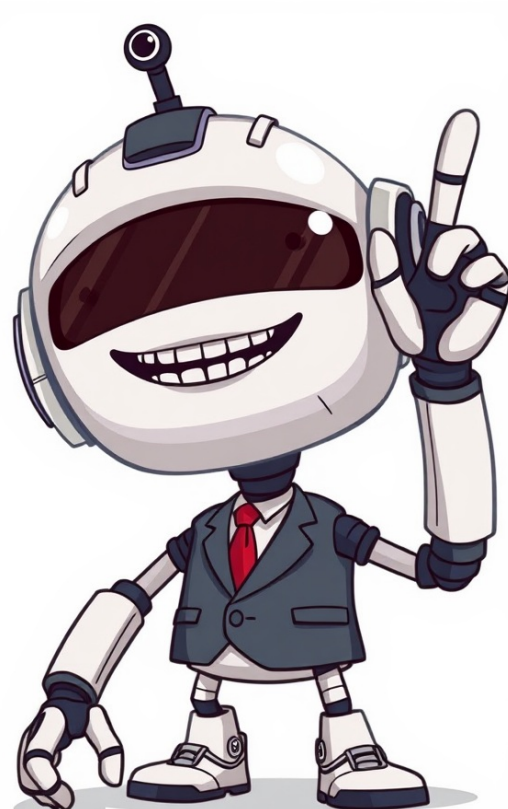


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Gerunds hit two birds with one stone because they look like verbs but act like nouns. They all end in -ing, but not all -ing words are gerunds. So, what is a gerund? Keep reading to learn about its functions and how to use it in a sentence. Ill also show you many gerund examples to avoid grammatical mistakes. In proper grammar, gerunds are a deverbal noun in the -ing form but function as ordinary nouns in an English sentence. Since its a noun, a gerund can be any of the following: Subject, Direct object, Indirect object, Object of the preposition, Subject complement. Gerunds are formed by adding -ing to the base form of the verb to become an English noun. Some consider a gerund as an action noun. The English grammar rule is that a verb shows action, condition, or the state of being while expressing time. But the gerund doesnt perform any of those functions despite looking like a verb. Some believe that gerunds are abstract nouns because they denote a concept. Heres an example: Swimming is challenging to learn. The term swimming has a subject function instead of a lexical verb. Therefore, its in the gerund form. Joan is currently swimming in the kiddie pool. In the sentence above, is swimming is the verb phrase that shows action while expressing time. Here are more gerund examples: Doing homework is my passion. I consider putting a mask on a form of self-care. Gerunds have five different types depending on their functions in sentences. Gerunds can be subjects in the SV-O pattern of sentences. The term subject is a noun function meaning the thing that performs the action in the sentence. For example: Running is good for the heart. The grammatical subject in this sentence is running. Gerunds can also be in the objective case being governed by the verb. Heres an example: Gerunds can also be recipients of an action. Consider this sentence: I make working out a daily routine. Youll also come across gerunds complementing subjects of sentences. For example: The most therapeutic thing for me is meditating. A gerund can also be an object of a prepositional phrase. Objects of preposition always work with prepositions in sentences. For example: She got suspended for cheating. A gerund phrase is a phrase with a gerund and words that modify it or objects. Here are some sentence examples that contain gerund phrases: Playing with fire is dangerous. I can still recall falling in love with you. The gerund phrase functions as a subject or object in sentences too. In traditional grammar, a subject only occurs within finite clauses where it has to agree with the amount of finite verb forms. Gerund clauses are non-finite clauses because they include a secondary verb. They include the infinitive and gerundive forms since these verbs cannot be inflected for tense. Heres an example: I was surprised at Joe doing household chores. The entire clause here is Joe doing household chores. You can remove the subject of the gerund (I was surprised at doing household chores.) If your sentence has no object, use a gerund after the verb in active clauses. For example: I wouldnt recommend reading that book. (not I wouldnt recommend to read the book.) The subject must be overtly specified, usually before the non-finite verb form. This example uses the objective them because the subject is not the finite clauses grammatical subject. Many do not agree that them is a subject. In fact, the prescriptive rule is that one must object to the use of forms appropriate to the subjects of these clauses. Thats because they lead to two noun expressions that are not connected. Many people confuse gerunds with present participle phrases because they take the -ing form in writing. Its one of the several writing issues that even native speakers encounter. The best way to identify a gerund is by remembering that its role is a verbal noun or noun phrase. Meanwhile, the present participle form functions as a verb phrase. Some also find it challenging to differentiate between the gerund and infinitive forms. The infinitive pattern always starts with a to and then the basic form of an action word. Gerunds take the base form plus -ing. Both are used in a noun sense. Unless the sentence contains modal verbs, two verbs joined together means the second one is either an infinitive or gerund. For example: I like listening to music. A gerund phrase may be hard to spot in a larger sentence. Heres an example: I wish you like my offering you this gift. The possessive form of the pronoun my is an adjective form that describes or modifies the gerund offering. The indirect object of the sentence is you, while this gift is the direct object of the gerund. All in all, the gerund phrase is my offering you this gift. You can also use a non-possessive noun or pronoun (e.g., me, Candace) before the gerund. Doing so will help emphasize the actor over the action. Gerunds have different uses and styles in other languages. A Latin gerund is formed using -andum, -endum, and noun inflexions. Romance languages do not have case inflections and are used in an adjectival function. In French grammar, a gerund is formed using the stem form and the suffix -ant. Gerunds are one of the verbals with noun properties, an adjectival function, or an adverbial function. To recall, a gerund ends in -ing and has the role of a noun. Be careful not to mistake the progressive tense for a gerund. The gerund must take the position of either a subject or object in the sentence. Key takeaways: Gerunds are verbs ending in -ing that act as nouns in a sentence. They take on roles like subject, object, or complement. Identify gerunds by checking if the -ing word functions as a noun, not a verb. Gerund phrases include a gerund and its modifiers or objects, working together as a noun. They bonded over their shared love of hiking. I hope to set a new record in swimming. What do these two sentences have in common? They both end in verbs, but those verbs arent just verbs. Theyre gerunds. Think about what these verbs are doing. Theyre describing the action in these sentences like verbs usually do. Thats because gerunds dont describe action; they act as nouns. Gerunds are useful because they let us discuss actions more abstractly, framing them as causes, hobbies, or objects of action. Table of contents: What is a gerund, and what is its function? Gerunds vs. the present participle Types of gerunds Gerunds vs. infinitives How to identify gerunds in a sentence Gerund FAQs The AI writing assistant for anyone with work to do What is a gerund, and what is its function? A gerund (pronounced [ER-und]) is a verb that ends in -ing and acts as a noun. By that, we mean that a verb+the word that describes the action happening, like biking, thinking, running, or speaking becomes a thing, a concept that can now be the sentences subject, direct object, indirect object, or the object of a preposition. While it remains a verb within the sentence, its role shifts from describing the action to being a focal point. Here are two examples of sentences that contain gerunds: Eating is an involved production for food bloggers like Shoshanna. Fazal turned off his phone and shut the door so he could focus on studying. Gerunds vs. the present participle While gerunds end in -ing and so do present participles, gerunds use a verb as a noun, while a participial verb acts as a verb or adjective. When you see a word ending in -ing, youll need to determine whether its a gerund or present participle by examining its function in the sentence. A gerund is a verb form that functions as a noun. The present participle is a verb form used in continuous tenses or as an adjective. Here are more examples of the difference between gerunds and the present participle: Gerund vs. present participle examples Gerund Present participle She is obsessed with swimming. Shes swimming. The movie left me wondering. Im wondering. Im more fond of walking to school. I was walking to school. Types of gerunds There are six types of gerunds, each serving a distinct role within a sentence: Subject: The gerund acts as the subject of the sentence. Example: Biking is my newest hobby. Subject complement: The gerund follows a linking verb and renames or describes the subject. Example: My preferred commuting method is biking. Direct object: The gerund receives the action of the verb directly. Example: I love biking. Indirect object: The gerund is the recipient of the action, typically appearing after verbs that express giving or showing. Example: My sister gave biking a try. Object complement: The gerund modifies or complements the direct object, describing what the action results in. Example: I see myself biking every day. Object of a preposition: The gerund follows a preposition and acts as its noun phrase. Example: I blocked out a few hours this Sunday for hiking. Gerunds vs. infinitives Gerunds arent the only kind of verbs that act as nouns; this is also true for infinitives. An infinitive combines the word to with a root verb. You can use an infinitive in two ways: as a noun that communicates a single concept and as an adjective to describe a noun within the sentence. Here are a few examples: Infinitive examples Sentence Infinitive Function I brought you some lemonade to drink with lunch. To drink Adjective To err is human. To err Noun I hope there are magazines to read in the waiting room. To read Adjective We love to travel, but we cant afford it last year. To travel Noun As you can see, infinitives are similar to gerunds but arent exactly the same. In a sentence where the infinitive acts as a noun, you can often replace it with a gerund without changing the meaning. However, the reverse isnt always true, especially when the gerund is the object of a preposition. For example, consider the incorrect sentence: I blocked out a few hours this Sunday for to bike. You could remove the preposition in this sentence (for), and it would make sense: I blocked out a few hours this Sunday to bike. But if you do this, you no longer have a prepositional phrase. In contrast, some transitive verbs can work only with an infinitive. Take a look at these examples: Correct and incorrect use of infinitives Example Infinitive use I plan to dance. Infinitive only I plan dancing. Incorrect Theyll decide to stay. Infinitive only Theyll decide staying. Incorrect In summary, both gerunds and infinitives can function as nouns. However, their usage often depends on the verb and the context, particularly whether the action is abstract or concrete. How to identify gerunds in a sentence Identifying gerunds in a sentence is easier once you understand their key characteristics. Look for a verb ending in -ing. A gerund always ends in -ing. However, not all words ending in -ing are gerunds. Determine if the -ing word acts as a noun: Gerunds function as nouns in a sentence. If the -ing word serves as a subject, object, or complement, it is a gerund. Distinguish gerunds from present participles: Present participles also end in -ing, but the present participle functions as part of verb phrases or as adjectives, while gerunds always act as nouns. The context of the sentence will help you determine if youre looking at a gerund or participle. Check for gerund phrases: A gerund phrase includes a gerund and any modifiers or objects. This entire phrase functions as a noun in the sentence. Gerund phrases A gerund phrase contains a gerund plus a modifier, an object, or both. Here are three examples of gerund phrases: Apologizing to them Underground exploring with scissors Like a gerund, a gerund phrase acts as a noun in a sentence. Take a look at how these gerund phrases work in that context: Apologizing to them is important to me. My brother enjoys underground exploring with his friends. I dont advise running with scissors at this time (or ever). Phrasal verbs You can also use gerunds with phrasal verbs, which are two- or three-word phrases that combine a verb with an adverb or preposition to communicate a unique concept that cant be expressed by either word alone. Common phrasal verbs include: Figure out Check into Take over Here are a few sentences that demonstrate how phrasal verbs and gerunds can work together: Example: Try as I might, I just cant figure out programming. Explanation: Figure out is the phrasal verb, and programming is the gerund acting as the verbs direct object. Example: Im worried my mother-in-law will take over cooking when she arrives. Explanation: Take over is the phrasal verb, and cooking is the gerund acting as the object of the phrasal verb. Gerund and present participles exercise Heres a quick exercise to solidify your understanding: Identify the gerunds and/or present participles (if any) in these sentences: Gerund and present participle identification exercise Sentence Answer Hiking in the mountains is exhilarating. Gerund (hiking is the subject) The dog was barking loudly. Present participle (barking is part of the verb phrase was barking) She is interested in learning new languages. Gerund (learning is the object of the preposition in) The singing birds woke me up. Present participle (singing acts as an adjective) I appreciate your helping me. Gerund (helping is the object of your) How gerunds can improve your sentences Gerunds are verbs disguised as nouns, allowing you to add clarity and variety to your sentences. By recognizing their role and practicing their use, you can improve your writing and comprehension. With some practice, youll unlock the power of the -ing form. Writing is easy with Grammarly Pop quiz time! Whats the gerund in the header above? If you said writing, youre correct. When youre confident that your writing is free of grammatical errors, digging deeper and tackling bigger ideas in your work doesnt seem quite as daunting. Grammarly helps by catching missed grammatical mistakes and offering suggestions, empowering you to refine your first draft into polished, publishable writing. Gerund FAQs Below are answers to frequently asked questions about gerunds and their role in grammar and writing. How do you create a gerund? A gerund is formed by adding -ing to the base form of a verb. While this is the same form as the present participle, its crucial to remember that not every verb ending in -ing is a gerund. Gerund example: Swimming is my favorite hobby. Present participle example: She is swimming in the lake. What is the difference between a verb and a gerund? A verb expresses an action, occurrence, or state of being and functions as the main part of the predicate in a sentence. A gerund is simply a participle that ends in -ing and functions as a noun. While verbs describe what the subject is doing or being, gerunds use that same action word as a subject, object, or complement. For example, in She runs every morning, runs is a verb. But in Running is her favorite exercise, running is a gerund acting as the subject. What are the different kinds of gerunds? Gerunds can play several different roles within a sentence: Subject Direct object Indirect object Object of a preposition Subject complement Object complement What are the 3 rules of gerunds? The three main rules of gerunds are: Gerunds always end in -ing and function as nouns in sentences, taking positions where nouns would typically appear. Gerunds must be preceded by possessive nouns or pronouns when referring to someone performing the action (e.g., I appreciate your helping rather than I appreciate you helping). Gerunds can take objects and be modified by adverbs, maintaining some verbal qualities (e.g., Quickly finishing the assignment impressed the teacher). What is a gerund phrase, and how is it different from a gerund? A gerund phrase is a gerund combined with other words, such as objects or modifiers, that complete its meaning, and together they function as a noun in a sentence. For example, Swimming in the cold lake every morning is a gerund phrase, while swimming is just a gerund. The main difference is that a gerund is a single word, while a gerund phrase is a group of words centered around the gerund, acting as a noun. How do parts of speech change in sentences? Gerunds arent the only instance where a word (or group of words) plays a role typically taken on by another type of word. For example, an adverbial clause is a clause that functions as an adverb. An adjective phrase is a phrase that describes a noun the way an adjective typically does. By: revel arway, Isabel McKay Tue Sep 23 2025 In English, a gerund is a for an action or an activity that ends in -ing. Gerunds are formed by adding -ing to a , as in swimming, cleaning, or eating. But because gerunds are nouns, we use them where you would use a noun, for example: As the subject: As the object: After a preposition: In this post well be looking at how to make a gerund, how to use them in sentences, some cases where youll need to use a gerund, and a couple of common problems English learners sometimes encounter with gerunds. Learning about gerunds will help you in moving forward with your English, so lets get started on that now! To form a gerund in English, add -ing to the of the verb: root + -ing. Whenever you add an ending that begins with a vowel to an English word, there are some spelling rules youll need to follow. For example: The final -e of the is deleted: The final consonant of the stem is sometimes doubled: Have a look at this list of spelling rules for adding English suffixes to review the details. Luckily, these are only for spelling, and they do not affect the pronunciation! Almost all verbs follow exactly the rule above, but there are two special groups: (can, could, might, should, etc.) are the only verbs that do not have a gerund form. Well talk a little more about this below! To form the gerund of a like clean up or move over, add -ing only to the verb part: A gerund phrase is a gerund plus some associated words, like adjectives: Prepositional phrases You can use gerund phrases anywhere you can use a regular gerund. Advanced English speakers will learn how to form very long gerund phrases, like this: Sandra forgetting to make her childrens lunches last Friday made them late for school. But these long gerund phrases are mostly used in academic or formal writing. Gerunds are nouns, so you can use them anywhere where you would use a noun in an English sentence. For example: as the subject of a sentence: Reading helps you to relax. Running a marathon made me tired as an object of a verb (lots more on this below!). My brother taught me gardening. English gerunds are . So they follow these classic rules: They do not take the plural -s. The object of a gerund can be plural! When a gerund is the subject, the verb is in its singular form. Gardening has taught me to understand nature better. Guessing is not as good as being sure. Swimming was my hobby when I was growing up. They do not use the indefinite article a/an. I used to enjoy a fishing. I used to enjoy fishing. 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