

Participle Phrases (as reduced relative clauses?)

Present Participle Phrase

a. This is used in an **active** sense, that is the action in the participle phrase is one which the subject actively performs

Example:

- Realizing that there was no hope to save his business, he gave up.

In the above sentence, the action "realizing" in the participle phrase (underlined) is **actively performed** by the subject "he".

b. The action in the present participle phrase is **immediately followed** by another by the same subject.

Example:

- Seeing such a terrible scene, she fainted.

In the above sentence, the action "seeing" is immediately followed by the action "fainted", both of which are actively performed by the same subject "she".

Past Participle Phrase

This is used in a **passive** sense: the action is done to the subject described by the phrase.

Example:

- Exhausted by the morning's work, I got myself a cup of coffee and sat down.

Perfect Participle Phrase

a. used in the **active** form with "**Having**" + **a Past Participle**. It shows that the action takes place **before** the action described in the main clause.

Example:

- Having brushed my teeth, I went to bed.

In the above sentence, the action "brushed" takes place **before** the action "went".

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b. used in the *passive* form with "***Having been***" + a ***Past Participle***. It shows that the action is done to the subject, not by the subject.

Example: ***Having been trained*** for 2 years, he has become very skilful in the trade.

Placing the Subject at the Beginning of the Participle Clause

It is possible to have a different subject from the subject of the main clause. In this case, place the subject at the beginning of the participle clause:

a) Subject + Present Participle

- ***The chairman being*** absent, the secretary chaired the meeting.
- ***Her eyes glistening*** with tears, she stood up and turned away from the people.
- Cats are long-lived creatures, ***some having*** a life-expectancy of around twenty years.

b) Subject + Having + Past Participle

- ***All the guests having*** arrived, the host started the party.
- ***The principal having*** finished his speech, all parents and students applauded.

c) Subject + Having + been + Past Participle

- ***The subject having been*** raised, he had no choice but to discuss it.
- ***The deal having been*** closed, we threw a party to celebrate it.

Participles used as Adjectives

Participles can be used like adjectives, as in the following examples:

Present Participle:

- No one was aware of the ***crying*** baby.
- He had an ***increasing*** desire get rich.

Past Participle:

- She left the city with a ***broken*** heart.
- The place looked ***abandoned***.

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Adjective(s) + Main Clause

Sometimes, a phrase containing one or more adjectives can function like a participle phrase.

Examples:

- **Aware of** my inadequacy, I tried to work very hard.
- **Surprised at** my reaction, she tried to console me.
- **Scared and pale**, he answered very slowly.

In a similar way, the phrase can also be written with a noun group, followed by an adjective, an adjunct, to describe something which is connected with the subject of a sentence.

Examples:

- "What do you mean by that?" Mary said, **her face pale**.
- She stood very erect, **her body absolutely stiff**.

A Note to Students

a. Many students tend to overlook the basic criteria in using participle clauses. The **two actions in the sentence must refer to the same subject**, be they active actions that the subject does or passive actions done to the subject.

✘: Getting poor results, my parents were really upset.

The mistake in this sentence obviously lies in the fact that the action "getting" is not an action performed by the subject, "my parents". It is me who gets poor results, not my parents!

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b. Another common error is that students tend to overlook the fact that the two actions have to be in a cause-and-effect relationship or a before-and-after sequential relationship.

✗: Having considerate and loving parents, Mary loves sports and outdoor activities.

Some students tend to think that the function of participle clauses is to incorporate more than one action in a sentence. They fail to realize that the two actions have to have some relationship, as illustrated in the following:

Cause-and-effect relationship: Having considerate parents, she could do whatever she wants. ✓

Sequential relationship: Having locked the door, I went to sleep. ✓

c. Students also tend to mistake participle clauses with gerund clauses, as in the following:

✗: Reading at night, it is my hobby. (Participle Clause)

✓: Reading at night is my hobby. (Gerund Clause)

The above mistake arises because the student may have forgotten the fact that if a sentence begins with a participle clause, the two verbs must refer to the same subject. In this sentence, the verb "read" is not performed by the subject "it", and so the sentence is wrong. In this case when the subject of the sentence is an activity, a gerund clause should be used.

d. Some students also tend to make the careless mistake of having no finite verb for the sentence that begins with a participle clause. This may be because students may be confused when they write complex sentences (and sentences having participle clauses are complex sentences), thereby producing incorrect sentences like these:

✗: Impressed by the way the girl carried herself, John, who had never met someone as irresistible as her, suddenly losing all his confidence.

✓:, suddenly lost all his confidence.