

## Same Form, but Different Functions: Various Meanings of *Verb+ing* and *Verb+ed*

Smoking is harmful.  
She is smoking now.

Choosing correct verb forms can be challenging, especially because depending on the context, the same form can have more than one function. For example, the two sentences above contain the identical form *smoking*, but grammatically this form functions differently since it appears in different parts of the sentences. It is important to be aware of various functions of *verb+ing* and *verb+ed* to know what grammatical rule to apply in a particular sentence. This handout outlines various functions of *verb+ing* and *verb+ed* and points out to the resources that describe a particular function in detail.

### Verb+ing

Two main grammatical categories related to *verb+ing* are **gerund** and **present participle**. The main distinction between the two is that a gerund always functions as a noun, while a present participle functions as a verb or an adjective.

	Example	Notes
<b>Gerund</b>		
As a noun	<u>Reading</u> is important. He avoids <u>drinking</u> coffee.	If the <i>-ing</i> form is a gerund, it should answer the question "what?". What is important? – <u>Reading</u> What does he avoid? – <u>Drinking coffee</u>
<b>Present Participle</b>		
To indicate the progressive aspect (in 6 tenses)	I am <u>going</u> I was <u>going</u> I will be <u>going</u> I have been <u>going</u> I had been <u>going</u> I will have been <u>going</u>	Present Progressive Past Progressive Future Progressive Present Perfect Progressive Past Perfect Progressive Future Perfect Progressive
As an adjective	We saw an <u>interesting</u> show. or The show was <u>interesting</u> .	If the <i>-ing</i> form functions as an adjective, it should describe some characteristics of a noun.
As a part of a reduced relative clause	Students <u>living</u> abroad receive valuable experience.	Full form: Students <u>who live</u> abroad receive valuable experience.
As a part of a reduced adverb clause	(While) <u>walking</u> to class, he met his old friend.	Full form: <u>While he was walking</u> to class, he met his old friend.

### Verb+ed

Before examining the functions of *verb+ed*, it is important to revise the principal forms of a verb. The table below is also helpful because it shows the distinction between **regular** and **irregular** verbs.

	Base (Infinitive)	Past 2 <sup>nd</sup> form	Past Participle 3 <sup>rd</sup> form
<b>Regular verbs</b> (verbs that take <i>-ed</i> in the past and past participle forms)	work	worked	worked
	copy	copied	copied
<b>Irregular verbs</b> (verbs that take a variety of forms and suffixes)	take	took	taken
	go	went	gone

As you can see, only **regular** verbs take the *-ed* ending in the past and past participle forms. Since the purpose of this handout is to outline the functions of *verb+ed*, the table below focuses on the regular verbs only. It is important to note, however, that **irregular** verbs have the same functions as the regular verbs.

	Example	Notes
<b>Past</b>		
As the past simple tense	I <u>cooked</u> .	The 2 <sup>nd</sup> form of the verb.
<b>Past Participle</b>		
To indicate the perfect aspect (in 3 tenses)	I have <u>graded</u> I had <u>graded</u> I will have <u>graded</u>	Present Perfect Past Perfect Future Perfect
As an adjective	He is proud of the <u>finished</u> product. or The product is <u>finished</u> .	If the <i>-ed</i> form functions as an adjective, it should describe some characteristics of a noun.
As a part of a reduced relative clause	The students <u>selected</u> for the contest were happy.	Full form: The students <u>who were selected</u> for the contest were happy.
As a part of passive voice	This process is <u>called</u> conduction.	Passive formation: be (in any form) + Past Participle

### Practice

Identify the functions of the underlined verb-ing and verb-ed forms below.

People's beliefs about their own life-expectancy have not been extensively studied mainly due to the lack of data. Very few people actually have consistent beliefs about their own chances of survival at any time, and even if they do, measuring them in a meaningful and convincing way is difficult.

The life-cycle hypothesis makes a simple prediction about the relationship between a person's perceived risk of death and their consumption: those thinking they are less likely to die will have less consumption growth over time. Simply put, people expecting to live a long time will conserve resources early in life in order to have enough later. This means earlier consumption will be lower for those thinking that their chances of survival were worse. In this way, a higher expected chance of survival should have the same effect as a higher interest rate or a lower degree of impatience.

The Health and Retirement Study (HRS) has elicited subjective life-expectation data from its respondents since the study was incepted in 1992 (12 waves of the HRS have been completed 1992-2002, every two years). The following question was asked: What is the percent chance that you will live to be 75 or more?

The HRS, however, did not elicit consumption data from respondents. Instead, it provided measurements of assets, income, and capital gains. These can be used to deduct a consumption level for the time periods between survey interviews. This process leads to a large amount of measurement error, though, as the assets, income, and capital gains are all measured with non-trivial measurement error to begin with.

Practice exercise adapted from Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Papers. (2009). Ann Arbor, MI: The Regents of the University of Michigan.

### Extra resources

To learn more about some of the verb forms outlined in this handout, please see the following Writing Center handouts:

- Active and Passive Voice
- Choosing Between Infinitive and Gerund: "To do" or "doing"?
- Using Reduced Relative Clauses to Write Concisely
- Verb Tenses

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