

# The Gerund Phrase

Recognize a *gerund phrase* when you see one.

A gerund phrase will begin with a gerund, an *ing* word, and will include other modifiers and/or objects. Gerund phrases always function as nouns, so they will be subjects, subject complements, or objects in the sentence. Read these examples:

*Eating ice cream on a windy day* can be a messy experience if you have long, untamed hair.

*Eating ice cream on a windy day* = subject of the verb *can be*.

A more disastrous activity for long-haired people is *blowing giant bubble gum bubbles with the car windows down*.

*Blowing giant bubble gum bubbles with the car windows down* = subject complement of the verb *is*.

Wild food adventures require *getting your hair cut to a short, safe length*.

*Getting your hair cut to a short, safe length* = direct object of the verb *require*.

Don't mistake a gerund phrase for a present participle phrase.

Gerund and present participle phrases are easy to confuse because they both begin with an *ing* word. The difference is that a gerund phrase will always function as a noun while a present participle phrase describes another word in the sentence. Check out these examples:

*Jamming too much clothing into a washing machine* will result in disaster.

*Jamming too much clothing into a washing machine* = gerund phrase, the subject of the verb *will result*.

*Jamming too much clothing into the washing machine*, Amir saved \$1.25 but had to tolerate the curious stares of other laundry patrons as his machine bucked and rumbled with the heavy load.

*Jamming too much clothing into the washing machine* = present participle phrase describing *Amir*.

Bernard hates *buttering toast with a fork*.

*Buttering toast with a fork* = gerund phrase, the direct object of the verb *hates*.

**Buttering toast with a fork**, Bernard vowed that he would finally wash the week's worth of dirty dishes piled in the sink.

**Buttering toast with a fork** = present participle phrase describing **Bernard**.

My dog's most annoying habit is **hogging the middle of the bed**.

**Hogging the middle of the bed** = gerund phrase, the subject complement of the linking verb **is**.

Last night I had to sleep on the couch because I found my dog Floyd **hogging the middle of the bed**.

**Hogging the middle of the bed** = present participle phrase describing **Floyd**.



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