

## PHRASES

**A phrase is a group of related words that is used as a single part of speech and does not contain a verb and its subject.**

Examples:     **has been sitting** [verb phrase; no subject]  
                  **about you and me** [prepositional phrase; no subject or verb]

If a group of words has a subject and a verb, then the group of words is not a phrase.

Examples:     **We found** your pen. [a subject and a verb; *we* is the subject of *found*]  
                  if **she will go** [a subject and a verb; *she* is the subject of *will go*]

### Exercise 1

**Identifying Phrases:** Decide whether or not each group of words is a phrase. Write P for phrase and NP for not a phrase.

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. was hoping          | 6. since Donna wrote   |
| 2. if she really knows | 7. after they leave    |
| 3. with Alice and me   | 8. has been cleaned    |
| 4. will be writing     | 9. on Lotte's desk     |
| 5. inside the house    | 10. as the plane lands |

## PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

**A prepositional phrase is a group of words beginning with a preposition and ending with a noun or pronoun.**

In the following examples of prepositional phrases, the prepositions are boldfaced.

**instead of** a picnic  
**behind** our house  
**under** the sea

**The noun or pronoun that ends the prepositional phrase is the *object* of the preposition that begins the phrase.**

The prepositional phrase in the following sentence is in boldfaced type.

**In their fight against cancer**, scientists have discovered interferon.  
Here *fight* is the object of the preposition *in*. How is *cancer* used? What preposition does it follow? Remember: Like other sentence parts, objects of prepositions may be compound.

Do not be misled by a modifier coming after the noun or pronoun in a prepositional phrase; the noun or pronoun is still the object.

Example: Mother and Mrs. Braun worked **at the polls** today. [The object of the preposition *at* is *polls*; *today* is an adverb telling *when* and modifying the verb *worked*.]

## Exercise 2

**Identifying Prepositions and Their Objects:** In the following sentences there are twenty prepositions. Underline the prepositions once and underline their objects twice.

Example: Lady Jane Grey was England's most unfortunate queen; she reigned over the country  
for only nine days. -----  
-----

1. This bright and lovely young girl was caught up in intrigue and a bloody struggle for power.
2. When Henry VIII died, his young son Edward succeeded him as king.
3. Only a boy, Edward was used by the cunning Duke of Northumberland for his own purposes.
4. Northumberland wanted the power of the throne for himself and his family.
5. Jane had no claim to the throne, for Edward had two sisters, Mary and Elizabeth.
6. Nevertheless, Northumberland forced her into marriage with his own son.
7. The evil duke persuaded the young king that he should name Lady Jane as the heir to the throne.
8. Therefore, when Edward died at fifteen of tuberculosis, Jane Grey was proclaimed queen.
9. After only nine days, the throne was restored to Mary, the rightful heir.
10. Sixteen-year-old Jane was imprisoned and executed on charges of high treason against the crown.

## THE ADJECTIVE PHRASE

Prepositional phrases are used in sentences mainly as adjectives and adverbs. Prepositional phrases used as adjectives are called *adjective phrases*.

Example: The members **of the club** want sweatshirts **with the club emblem**.

The prepositional phrase *of the club* is used as an adjective modifying the noun *members*. *With the club emblem* is also used as an adjective because it modifies the noun *sweatshirts*. Study the following pairs of sentences. Notice that the nouns used as adjectives may easily be converted to objects of prepositions in adjective phrases.

NOUNS USED AS ADJECTIVES

The **kitchen** light is on.

The **Chicago** and **New York** airports are crowded.

ADJECTIVE PHRASES

The light **in the kitchen** is on.

The airports **in Chicago and New York** are crowded.

Unlike a one-word adjective, which usually precedes the word it modifies, an adjective phrase always follows the noun or pronoun it modifies.

More than one prepositional phrase may modify the same word.

Example: The bottle **of vitamins on the shelf** is mine. [The prepositional phrases *of vitamins* and *on the shelf* modify the noun *bottle*.

A prepositional phrase may also modify the object of another prepositional phrase.

Example: The horse **with the white blaze on its face** broke loose. [The phrase *with the white blaze* modifies the noun *horse*. *Blaze* is the object of the preposition *with*. The phrase *on its face* modifies *blaze*.

### Exercise 3

**Revising Sentences by Using Adjective Phrases:** On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by using adjective phrases in place of the italicize nouns used as adjectives. Draw an arrow to the word each phrase modifies.

1. Mrs. Davies has a new *computer* table.
2. We bought a new *porch* swing.
3. The *car* seats were scorching hot.
4. The *St. Louis* arch is a well-known landmark.
5. The *barn* door was left open.
6. We need to get a new *dog* chain.
7. Saturday was a perfect *autumn* day.
8. That song is at the top of the *rhythm and blues* chart. (one phrase)
9. The mayor discussed the *Boston traffic* problem. (two phrases)
10. Visitors to Washington, D.C., should have a *subway* map. (one phrase)

## THE ADVERB PHRASE

When a prepositional phrase is used as an adverb to tell *when*, *where*, *how*, *how much*, or *how far*, it is called an *adverb phrase*.

Examples: She sailed **across the lake**. [The adverb phrase *across the lake* tells *where* she sailed.]  
Tim will finish **by Wednesday**. [The adverb phrase *by Wednesday* tells *when* Tim will finish.]  
She answered **with a smile**. [The adverb phrase *with a smile* tells *how* she answered.]  
The calculations erred **by two inches**. [*By two inches* is an adverb phrase telling *how far* the calculations erred.]

In the previous examples, the adverb phrases all modify verbs. An adverb phrase may also modify an adjective or an adverb.

Examples: Mrs. Pearson is good **at volleyball** but better **at tennis**. [The adverb phrase *at volleyball* modifies the adjective *good*; *at tennis*, another adverb phrase, modifies the adjective *better*.]

I will call Ms. Gregory early **in the morning**. [*In the morning* is an adverb phrase modifying the adverb *early*.]

Unlike adjective phrases, which always follow the words they modify, an adverb phrase may appear at various places in a sentence.

Like adjective phrases, more than one adverb phrase may modify the same word.

Example: **During summers**, my older sister works **at the museum**. [The adverb phrase *during summers* and *at the museum* both modify the verb *works*. The first phrase tells *when* my sister works; the second phrase tells *where* she works. Notice that the first phrase precedes the word it modifies; the second phrase follows it.]

### Exercise 4

**Identifying Adverb Phrases and the Words They Modify:** Underline the prepositional phrases used as adverbs in each sentence. There may be more than one in each sentence. Underline the word it modifies twice.

1. Yesterday, many residents of Chicago suffered from the heat.
2. In the morning, my friends and I drove to Lincoln Park.
3. At noon, we ate our big picnic lunch with gusto.
4. Later in the day, we walked around the park.

5. An unusual monument stands near the picnic grounds.
6. This monument shows humanity as it marches through time.
7. In Rockefeller Center I once saw another artist's concept of time.
8. Three figures are painted on the ceiling; they represent Past, Present, and Future.
9. Wherever you stand in the room, Past's eyes are turned away from you; Future's eyes look outward and upward.
10. The eyes of Present, however, look straight at you.

## VERBALS AND VERBAL PHRASES

*Verbals* are forms of verbs that are used as other parts of speech. These words are really two parts of speech in one. *Verbals* are formed from verbs and function very much like verbs; they may be modified by adverbs and may have complements. They are, however, used as other parts of speech.

There are three kinds of verbals: *participles*, *gerunds*, and *infinitives*.

### THE PARTICIPLE

**A *participle* is a verb form that can be used as an adjective.**

The participle is part verb and part adjective.

Examples:     **Twirling** their canes, the dancers tapped across the stage.  
                   **Waxed** floors can be dangerously slippery.  
                   **Darting** suddenly, the cat escaped through the back door.

*Twirling* is part verb because it carries the action of the verb *twirl*. It is also part adjective because it modifies the noun *dancers* – *twirling dancers*. *Waxed*, formed from the verb *wax*, modifies the noun *floors*. *Darting*, formed from the verb *dart*, modifies the noun *cat*. Verb forms used as adjectives, such as *twirling*, *waxed*, and *darting*, are *participles*.

There are two kinds of participles: ***present participles*** and ***past participles***.

***Present participles* consist of the plain form of the verb plus *-ing*.**

Examples:     The **pouring** rain drove us inside.  
                   **Watching** the clock, the coach became worried.

Although participles are formed from verbs, they are not used to stand alone as verbs. A participle may, however, be used with a helping verb to form a verb phrase:

The rain **was pouring**.  
The coach **had been watching** the clock.

When a participle is used in a verb phrase, it is considered as part of the verb, not as an adjective.

**Past participles usually consist of the plain form of the verb plus *-d* or *-ed*.** Others are irregularly formed.

Examples: A **peeled** and **sliced** cucumber can be added to a garden salad. [The past participles *peeled* and *sliced* modify the noun *cucumber*.]  
The speaker, **known** for her eloquent speeches, drew applause from the audience. [The past participle *known* modifies the noun *speaker* – *known speaker*.]

Like a present participle, a past participle can also be part of a verb phrase. Just as in the case of the present participle, a past participle used in a verb phrase is considered part of the verb, not as an adjective.

Examples: She **was told** that tickets were available.  
She **has corrected** her homework.

### Exercise 6

**Identifying Participles and the Words They Modify:** Underline the participles used as adjectives in the following sentences. Underlined the noun or pronoun modified twice.

1. The prancing horses were loudly applauded by the delighted audience.
2. The colorful flags, waving in the breeze, brightened the gloomy day.
3. Swaggering and boasting, he made us extremely angry.
4. The game scheduled for tonight has been postponed because of rain.
5. Leaving the field, the happy player rushed to her parents sitting in the bleachers.
6. Rain pattering on the roof made an eerie sound.
7. We thought the banging shutter upstairs was someone walking in the attic.
8. Painfully sunburned, I vowed never to be so careless again.
9. Terrified by our big dog, the burglar turned and fled.
10. The platoon of soldiers, marching in step, crossed the field to the stirring music of the military band.

## THE PARTICIPIAL PHRASE

A participle may be modified by an adverb or by a prepositional phrase, and it may have a complement. These related words combine with the participle in a *participial phrase*.

***A participial phrase consists of a participle and its related words, such as modifiers and complements, all of which act together as an adjective.***

Examples:     **Switching its tail**, the panther paced. [participle with object *tail*]  
                  She heard me **sighing loudly**. [participle with the adverb *loudly*]  
                  **Living in Nebraska**, he learned to respect blizzards. [participle with  
                  prepositional phrase modifier *in Nebraska*]  
                  **Quickly grabbing the keys**, I dashed for the door. [Notice that *quickly*, which  
                  precedes the participle and modifies it, is included in the phrase.]

A participial phrase should be placed very close to the word it modifies. Otherwise the phrase may appear to modify another word, and the sentence may not make sense.

MISPLACED           He saw a moose riding his motorcycle through the woods.

IMPROVED           Riding his motorcycle through the woods, he saw a moose.

### Exercise 7

**Writing Sentences with Participial Phrases:** Write ten sentences using one of the following participial phrases in each. Be sure to place each phrase very close to the noun or pronoun it modifies and to punctuate the phrases correctly.

1. stating her objections
2. excusing me from the test
3. decorated with streamers of crepe paper
4. laughing at my silly joke
5. charging like an angry bull
6. kept in a sunny spot
7. speaking as quickly as possible
8. confused by the wording of the question
9. destined to achieve fame
10. standing with one foot in the rowboat

## THE GERUND

**A gerund is a verb form ending in *-ing* that is used as a noun.**

A participle is part verb and part adjective. A *gerund* is part verb and part noun. It is formed by adding *-ing* to the plain form of the verb. Like nouns, gerunds are used as subjects, predicate nominatives, direct objects, or objects of prepositions.

Examples:     **Singing** is fun. [subject]  
                  Their favorite exercise is **running**. [predicate nominative]  
                  Shelly likes **swimming**. [direct object]  
                  Get special shoes for **jogging**. [object of preposition]

Like nouns, gerunds may be modified by adjectives and adjective phrases.

Examples:     We listened to the **beautiful singing of the cardinal**. [The adjective *beautiful* and the adjective phrase *of the cardinal* modify the gerund *singing*. *Singing* is used as the object of the preposition *to*.]

                  The **loud ringing of my alarm** wakes me every morning. [Both the adjective *loud* and the adjective phrase *of my alarm* modify the gerund *ringing*, which is the subject of the sentence.]

Like verbs, gerunds may also be modified by adverbs and adverb phrases.

Examples:     Floating **lazily in the pool** is my favorite summer pastime. [The gerund *floating*, used as the subject of the sentence, is modified by the adverb *lazily* and also by the adverb phrase *in the pool*, which tells where.]

                  Brandywine enjoys galloping **briskly on a cold morning**. [The gerund *galloping*, which is the direct object of the sentence, is modified by the adverb *briskly* and also by the adverb phrase *on a cold morning*, which tells *when*.]

Gerunds, like present participles, end in *-ing*. To be a gerund, the verbal must be used as a noun. In the following sentence, there are three words ending in *-ing*, but only one of them is a gerund.

Example:     Accepting the coach's advice, she was planning to go on with her **training**.  
                  [*Accepting* is a present participle modifying *she*, and *planning* is part of the verb phrase *was planning*. Only *training*, used as object of the preposition *with*, is a gerund.]

### Exercise 8

**Identifying and Classifying Gerunds:** Underline the gerunds in the following sentences. Label each as subject, predicate nominative, direct object, or object of preposition.

1. Her laughing attracted attention.

2. By studying, you can improve your grades.
3. One requirement is practicing.
4. Yelling violates the basic rules of courtesy.
5. Frowning, Dad discouraged our bickering.
6. Yvette's favorite activity is boating.
7. Before leaving, we sat on the dock and watched the fading light.
8. Yesterday, Mrs. Jacobs was discussing flying.
9. One of Steve's bad habits is boasting.
10. Without knocking, the hurrying child opened the door.

### THE GERUND PHRASE

**A gerund phrase consists of a gerund together with its complements and modifiers, all of which act together as a noun.**

Examples:     **The gentle pattering of the rain** was the only sound. [The gerund phrase is used as the subject of the sentence. The gerund *pattering* is modified by the article *the*, the adjective *gentle*, and the prepositional phrase *of the rain*. Notice that modifiers preceding the gerund are included in the gerund phrase.]  
 I feared **skiing rapidly down the mountain**. [The gerund phrase is used as the object of the verb *feared*. The gerund *skiing* is modified by the adverb *rapidly* and by the prepositional phrase *down the mountain*.]  
 His job is **giving customers their menus**. [The gerund phrase is used as a predicate nominative. The gerund *giving* has a direct object, *menus*, and an indirect object, *customers*.]  
 Evelyn Ashford won the gold medal for **running the hundred-meter dash**. [The gerund phrase is the object of the preposition *for*. The gerund *running* has a direct object, *dash*.]

NOTE Whenever a noun or pronoun comes before a gerund, the possessive form should be used.

Examples     **Pedro's** constant practicing improved **his** playing.  
**My** playing the radio loudly is a bad habit.

## Exercise 9

**Writing Sentences with Gerund Phrases:** Following the directions given, write five sentences of your own. Underline the gerund phrase in each of your sentences.

EXAMPLE Use *writing* as the subject of the sentence. Include an adjective modifying the gerund.

Clear writing is an essential communications skill.

1. Use *cheering* as the subject. Include an adjective phrase modifying the gerund.
2. Use *buying* as the direct object of the sentence. Include a direct object of the gerund.
3. Use *showing* as the object of a preposition. Include in the gerund phrase a direct object and an indirect object of showing.
4. Use talking as a predicate nominative. Include an adverb and an adverb phrase modifying the gerund.
5. Use speaking as a gerund in any way you choose. Include in the gerund phrase a possessive pronoun modifying the gerund.

## THE INFINITIVE

**An *infinitive* is a verb form, usually preceded by *to*, that can be used as a noun, adjective, or adverb.**

Infinitives used as nouns: **To love is to care.** [*To love* is the subject; *to care* is the predicate nominative.]

Cheryl wanted **to work** on the play in any way but **to act.** [*To work* is the object of the verb wanted; *to act* is the object of the preposition *but*.]

Infinitives used as adjectives: The place **to visit** is Williamsburg. [*To visit* modifies *place*.]  
That was a record **to beat.** [*To beat* modifies *record*.]

Infinitives used as adverbs: Sabina Miller jumped **to shoot.** [*To shoot* modifies *jumped*.]  
Ready **to go**, we loaded the car. [*To go* modifies the adjective *ready*.]

NOTE *To* plus a noun or pronoun (*to school, to him, to the beach*) is a prepositional phrase not an infinitive. An infinitive is always the first participle part of the verb.

## Exercise 10

**Identifying and Classifying Infinitives:** Underline the infinitives in the following sentences. Label how each is used: noun, adjective, or adverb.

1. Barbara's ambition is to fly.
2. The road to take is the one on the left.
3. Fred has learned to tap-dance.
4. I am happy to oblige.
5. An easy way to win at tennis does not exist.
6. The grass began to grow after the much-needed rain.
7. The math team went to Mr. Ebert's house to study.
8. We met at the lake to fish.
9. That is not the correct amount of paper to order.
10. To persist can be a sign of stubbornness.

## THE INFINITIVE PHRASE

**An *infinitive phrase* consists of an infinitive together with its complements and modifiers.**

Infinitive phrases, like infinitives alone, can be used as adjectives, adverbs, or nouns.

Examples:     **To proofread your writing carefully** is important. [The infinitive phrase is used as a noun, as the subject of the sentence. The infinitive has an object, *writing*, and is modified by the adverb *carefully*.]  
                  They wanted **to vacation in New York**. [The infinitive phrase is used as a noun - the object of *wanted*. The infinitive is modified by the phrase *in New York*.]  
                  She is the player **to watch in the next game**. [The infinitive phrase is used as an adjective modifying the predicate nominative *player*. The infinitive is modified by the adverbial prepositional phrase *in the next game*.]  
                  We are eager **to finish this project**. [The infinitive phrase is used as an adverb modifying the predicate adjective *eager*. The infinitive has a direct object, *project*.]

## THE INFINITIVE WITH “to” OMITTED

Sometimes the *to* of the infinitive will be omitted in a sentence.

Examples: I'll help you **pack**.  
Marla let the dogs **run** loose in the field.  
We watched the dancers **practice** the new routine.

### Exercise 11

**Identifying and Classifying Infinitives and Infinitive Phrases:** Underline the infinitive or infinitive phrases in the following sentences. Label each one according to its use: noun, adjective, or adverb.

1. To dance gracefully requires coordination.
2. She wanted to join the chorus.
3. Sandy needs to study.
4. I'm going to the pond to fish.
5. A good way to lose weight is to eat moderately.
6. After our long vacation, we needed to get back in training.
7. The best way to get there is to take the bus.
8. Don't dare open that present before your birthday.
9. Juanita and Matt shopped to find the perfect gift.
10. He lives to swim and to water-ski.

## APPOSITIVES AND APPOSITIVE PHRASES

An *appositive* is a noun or pronoun that follows another noun or pronoun to identify or explain it.

Example Eric, a talented musician, plans to study in Europe.

Like any noun or pronoun, an appositive may have adjective and adjective phrase modifiers. If it does, it is called an appositive phrase.

**An *appositive phrase* is made up of the appositive and its modifiers.**

In the following sentences, the appositives and appositive phrases are in boldfaced type.

Examples     My neighbor, **Dr. Weber**, got her degree in entomology, the scientific study of insects.

Lucy Babcock, **my longtime friend**, has a new Scottish terrier, **MacTavish**.

**Note:** Occasionally the appositive phrase precedes the noun or pronoun explained.

Examples     **An accomplished gardener**, Mr. Ducett could grow vegetables in Antarctica.

**The terror of our block**, little Allison was on the warpath.

Appositives and appositive phrases are usually set off by commas, unless the appositive is a single word closely related to the preceding word. The comma is always used when the word to which the appositive refers is a proper noun.

Examples     Judge Randolph, **the woman running for Congress**, is our guest speaker.

My brother **Richard** goes to college.

Linda, **the editor**, assigned the story.

## Exercise 12

**Identifying Appositive Phrases:** Underline the appositive phrases in each of the following sentences. Circle the appositive and draw an arrow to the word to which each appositive refers.

1. Our community has a new organization, a writer's club.
2. Beverly Wiley, a college instructor, started the group at the request of former students.
3. Ms. Wiley, a published author, conducts the meetings as workshops.
4. The writers meet to read their works in progress, fiction or poetry, and to discuss suggestions for improvement.
5. The members, people from all walks of life, have varied interests.
6. One man, a police detective, wants to write stories based on his experiences as an investigator.
7. Another, a retired doctor, likes to write poems, funny limericks, and haunting ballads.

8. One woman, a local librarian, has published short stories but wants to write a historical novel.
9. The club, Writers, Inc., meets twice a month.
10. My youngest brother, Ted, is organizing a similar club for elementary school writers.

## Review

**Identifying and Classifying Prepositional Phrases:** Each of the following sentences contains one or more prepositional phrases. Underline each prepositional phrase. Circle the word(s) they modify and tell whether they are adjective or adverb phrases.

1. We divided the prizes among five people, but four of them were still unhappy.
2. Please stand next to me while we wait for our turn.
3. Seven people besides me waited at my stop for the bus.
4. The cook returned to the kitchen to prepare the sauce.
5. We rested until one o'clock, but after that we continued our journey.
6. Did you look down as you walked over the narrow bridge?
7. The glass figure on the narrow shelf was knocked down, but it landed on the sofa and did not break.
8. Wait inside the house until the storm is over.
9. No one in the audience spoke during the performance because the play was so gripping.
10. Tara went on the field trip in place of Tanya, who was ill.

**Identifying Verbals and Appositives:** Underline the verbals and appositives in each sentence. Identify what type of word it is.

11. If you ever try organizing a picnic for a large group, remember to plan ahead.
12. First, finding a suitable location may be difficult.
13. Public parks are best, offering many facilities for picnickers.

14. A flier is a good way to inform everyone about time, place, menu suggestions, and activity plans.
15. Coordinating the foods for the picnic, an almost impossible task, requires patience and the ability to organize others.

**Identifying Appositives, Verbals, Appositive Phrases, and Verbal Phrases:** Each of the following sentences contains appositives or appositive phrases, verbals, or verbal phrases. Underline the word or phrase indicated in parenthesis.

16. The day can be made more enjoyable by planning a few games and contests. (gerund phrase)
17. Water balloons and egg-tossing, perennial favorites, add excitement along with a mess. (appositive phrase)
18. Identifying the winners of those contests is easy – just look for people not drenched or egg-splattered. (gerund phrase)
19. On the day of your picnic, remember to check the weather report. (infinitive phrase)
20. A rainy day is never fun, but sometimes it helps to know about the rain in advance. (infinitive phrase)
21. Also, hearing that the day will be fine will help to set your mind at ease. (infinitive phrase)
22. Then you can let yourself enjoy the day with everyone else. (infinitive phrase)
23. You will probably decide that the planning was worthwhile. (gerund)
24. You may even decide to volunteer as organizer of the next scheduled picnic. (participle)
25. News of one successful event, circulated among friends, will lead to plans for other events. (participial phrase).