**VERBALS**

**GERUNDS, PARTICIPLES, INFINITIVES**

**VERBALS**

Verbals are words that derive from verbs and thus express an action or state of being, but importantly, they do not function as verbs. Rather, verbals function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

This handout will discuss the three types of verbals: gerunds, participles, and infinitives.

**Note:** Throughout the remainder of this handout, **bold and italics** are used together to identify verbals. Underlining is used to identify verbal phrases: gerund phrases, participial phrases, and infinitive phrases. Verbal phrases consist of a verbal along with modifier(s), complement(s), and/or object(s). Verbal phrases function as an extended form of the verbal.

**GERUNDS**

Gerunds are verbals that end in –ing and function as nouns. As such, gerunds can be used as subjects, subject complements, direct objects, indirect objects, or objects of prepositions.

Here are some examples:

1. *Being sick* is never fun. ← In sentence 1, the gerund phrase *being sick* is the subject of the sentence.

2. My favourite pastime is *hiking*. ← In sentence 2, the gerund *hiking* is the subject complement.

3. In general, Canadians enjoy *playing and watching hockey*. ← In sentence 3, the gerund phrase *playing and watching hockey* is the direct object of the verb enjoy.

4. During exam periods, most students feel that it is important to give studying their full attention. ← In sentence 4, the gerund *studying* is the indirect object of the verb give.

5. The boy was excited about *spending the summer in the country*. ← In sentence 5, the gerund phrase *spending the summer in the country* is the object of the preposition *about.*
PARTICIPLES

Particiles are verba that function as adjectives; that is, they modify nouns or pronouns. Present participies always end in –ing (and thus look just like gerunds). Past participles most frequently end in –ed, but they may also end in –en, -t, -d, or –n.

Here are some examples:

1. Practically steaming with frustration, the commuters wait for their delayed train to arrive.

2. I called for help as soon as I found the hurt bird.

3. Being a hard-working student at the college, Sophie knows her way around the library.

4. The APA states that children exposed to media violence are more likely to be aggressive as adults.

5. The dog looked guiltily toward the chewed and torn shoes lying on the floor.

6. Undeterred by the fact that skiing was proving more challenging than he had imagined, Christopher headed back out onto the slopes.

Remember: gerunds and participles look alike, but they are different. In sentence 6, skiing is a gerund. The participle proving is not used as an adjective here, but rather is used to form the past continuous verb was proving. (See below)

Note: Though participles themselves never function as verbs (they are verba, after all!), they can combine with auxiliary verbs to form various verb tenses. In this box, underlining and italics are used together to identify verbs. Here are a few examples:

The band is going to play soon.

I have been a big fan for a long time.

Did you know the group was hoping to sign a record deal before the end of the year?

They have been sending demos to record labels every few months.

They had decided that if they didn’t hear from anyone soon, they would let their dream go.

It felt like they had been waiting forever when they finally got signed!

They will be coming on stage in just a minute!

After this show, I will have seen them play six times.

By the time their album comes out, they will have been playing together for ten years!
INFINITIVES

Infinitives are verbals that consist of the word to plus the simple (or “stem”) form of the verb. Infinitives function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

Here are some examples:

1. **To be patient** is of the utmost importance in this job. In sentence 1, the infinitive phrase *to be patient* is the subject of the sentence.

2. Since she was a little girl, Polly’s dream has always been to write. In sentence 2, the infinitive *to write* is a subject complement.

3. I refuse **to accept** this behavior from you! In sentence 3, the infinitive phrase *to accept this behavior from you* is the direct object of the verb *refuse*.

Here are some examples of how infinitives function as adjectives:

4. Don’t forget that you have an assignment **to complete** over the weekend.

5. He had the skills and spirit **to win**.

Here are some examples of how infinitives function as adverbs:

6. We’re practicing **to improve** our pronunciation.

7. She plays **to win**.

For more information on the differences between gerunds, participles, and infinitives, and for tips on how to use verbals correctly in your writing, please refer to the following websites:

→ http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/627/1/

→ http://www.writingcentre.uottawa.ca/hypergrammar/verbals.html

→ http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/

You are also welcome to make an appointment with The Learning Centre staff:

→ http://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/tlc/booknow/