

**TAMIU**  
 University College  
**Writing**  
**Center**

**Sentence variety exercise 9**  
**Participial Phrases**

***Present Participial Phrases: non-restrictive***

Present participles are -ing words used as adjectives. A *non-restrictive* present participial phrase contains nonessential information and is set off by a comma or commas.

Pattern:

- a. **Present participial phrase**, *subject* + verb + object.

Example: **Dashing to the front door**, *Enrique* dropped the pizza.

Punctuation Rule: Always place a comma after an introductory participial phrase -one that precedes an independent clause.

- b. *Subject*, **present participial phrase**, verb + object.

Example: *Jonathan*, **smoking his cigarette**, kicked Enrique.

Punctuation Rule: Place commas around non-restrictive participial phrases.

- c. *Subject* + verb + object, **present participial phrase**.

Example: *Erica* rides the bus, **billowing black exhaust into the air**.

Punctuation Rule: Always place a comma after an independent clause when it precedes a non-restrictive participial phrase.

***Present Participial Phrases: restrictive***

A *restrictive* present participial phrase contains essential information and is not set off by a comma or commas unless it precedes the noun or pronoun it describes.

Pattern:

- a. *Subject* **present participial phrase** verb + object.

Example: *A lady* **singing an R. Kelly song** fixes the computer.

Punctuation Rule: Note that "A lady" could be referring to any person; therefore, the participial phrase is essential information that identifies the lady. Thus, commas are not needed.

- b. **Present participial phrase**, *subject* + verb + object.

Example: **Running through the alley**, the *girl* met her friend, Sally.

Punctuation Rule: Note that a comma is placed after the participial phrase because it precedes the noun it describes.

- c. *Subject* + verb + object **present participial phrase**, etc.

Example: *Hillary* saw a long-haired boy **pulling on his helmet**.

Punctuation Rule: Note that “A long-haired boy” could be referring to any person; therefore, the participial phrase is restrictive (essential information) that identifies the boy. Thus, commas are not needed.

### Practice 1

**Directions:** In the following sentences, underline all present participial phrases. Place an “N” above all non-restrictive participial phrases and a “R” above all restrictive participial phrases, and correct any errors in punctuation.

1. Boiling rapidly in the kettle on the back burner the hot water gave off clouds of steam.
2. Phil, wondering at his wife’s sudden good fortune started reading his own horoscope.
3. He was previously convinced that anyone, believing in this “astrology stuff,” should have his or her head examined.
4. Linda, puzzling over Phil’s sudden interest in the newspaper, crept up behind him and peered over his shoulder.
5. Smiling because he flung the newspaper shut she went to the stove, spooned tea leaves from the boiling water into a cup, and wondered how her future would arrange itself before her.

### Practice 2

**Directions:** Create the following sentences as instructed.

1. Use the word “swallowing” in an introductory present participial phrase.
2. Write a sentence that contains a restrictive present participial phrase that should *not* be set off with commas.
3. Use the word “dancing” in a sentence, and write a non-restrictive participial phrase.
4. Change the word “fight” into a present participle, add other words to make it a participial phrase, and connect it in front of an independent clause.

***Past Participial Phrases: non-restrictive***

Past participles are used as adjectives and usually end with -ed or -en. A *non-restrictive* past participial phrase contains nonessential information and is set off by a comma or commas.

Pattern:

- a. **Past participial phrase**, *subject* + verb + object.

Example: **Excited by the sound of whistling**, *Fido* wagged his tail.

Punctuation Rule: Always place a comma after an introductory past participial phrase.

- b. *Subject*, **past participial phrase**, verb + object.

Example: *Chuck*, **offended by the movie**, left the theater.

Punctuation Rule: Place commas before and after the past participial phrase – this separates the subject from the verb.

- c. *Subject* + verb + object, **past participial phrase**.

Example: *Mario* made a mistake, **confused by the professor's lecture**.

Punctuation Rule: Place a comma after the independent clause – this will separate the sentence from the non-restrictive past participial phrase.

***Past Participial Phrases: restrictive***

A restrictive past participial phrase contains essential information and is not set off by a comma or commas unless it precedes the noun or pronoun it describes.

Pattern:

- a. *Subject* **past participial phrase** verb + object.

Example: The *lady* **shocked by the sudden decrease in gas prices** pumped gas.

Punctuation Rule: The past participial phrase is essential information to the sentence, so the absence of commas makes its significance clear to the reader.

- b. **Past participial phrase**, *subject* + verb + object.

Example: **Stressed because of her heavy course load**, *she* joined yoga.

Punctuation Rule: Place a comma after an introductory participial phrase –one that precedes the noun it describes.

- c. *Subject* + verb + object **past participial phrase**.

Example: *Jessica cleaned her yard **covered with leaves**.*  
 Punctuation Rule: The past participial phrase is essential information to the sentence, so the absence of commas makes its significance clear to the reader.

### **Practice 3**

**Directions:** In the following sentences, underline all past participial phrases, place an “N” above all non restrictive participial phrases and “R” above all restrictive participial phrases, and correct any errors in punctuation.

1. The grass planted two weeks ago is starting to turn brown.
2. Jersey Helgeson shocked by the sudden success of his one-act play vowed to give the proceeds from the first-week’s run to charity.
3. Overwhelmed by demands for tickets, the theater added two more shows.
4. The janitor Hugo startled by the superintendent dropped the fluorescent bulb from his perch on top of the stepladder.
5. Disqualified, for biting his opponent’s ear Mike Tyson later apologized at a press conference.

### **Practice 4**

**Directions:** Create the following sentences as instructed.

1. Use the word “irritated” in a past participial phrase in a sentence.
2. Add a past participial phrase to this sentence: “The dentist drilled the patient’s cavity without first giving him Novocain.”
3. Add this past participial phrase to a sentence: “thrilled that the art exhibit was coming to her small town.”
4. Change “abandon” into a past participle, add other words to form a past participial phrase, and attach the phrase to an independent clause.
5. Write a sentence that contains a past participial phrase that should *not* be set off with commas.

