What is a participle?
A participle is a verbal—a word formed from a verb but functioning differently. So, while derived from verb, a participle functions as an adjective.

Present Participial Phrases: nonrestrictive
A present participle is identified by its “-ing” ending. A nonrestrictive present participle 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.

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

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

Punctuation Rule:  Place commas around nonrestrictive 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 nonrestrictive participial phrase.

Present Participial Phrases: restrictive
A restrictive present participle 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 essential information that identifies the boy. Thus, commas are not needed.
Sentence Variety IX:
Participial Phrases

Practice 1

Directions: Underline all present participial phrases. Place “N” above all nonrestrictive participial phrases and an “R” above all restrictive participial phrases. 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: nonrestrictive
Past participles are used as adjectives and usually end with -ed or -en. A nonrestrictive past participial phrase contains nonessential information and is set off by a comma or commas.
Sentence Variety IX: Participial Phrases

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 around nonrestrictive participial phrases

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

Example: **Mario made a mistake, confused by the professor’s lecture.**
Punctuation Rule: Always place a comma after an independent clause when it precedes a nonrestrictive 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: 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. **Past participial phrase, subject + verb + object.**

Example: **Stressed because of her heavy course load, she joined** yoga.
Punctuation Rule: Note that a comma is placed after the participial phrase because it precedes the noun it describes.

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

Example: **Jessica cleaned up the neighbor’s yard decorated with lawn gnomes.**
Punctuation Rule: The participial phrase is restrictive (essential information) that identifies which yard Jessica cleaned up. Thus, commas are not needed.

**Practice 3**

**Directions:** In the following sentences, underline all past participial phrases, place “N” above all nonrestrictive participial phrases and “R” above all restrictive participial phrases. 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.