

Identifying and Using Gerunds

A *gerund* (pronounced “jair – und”) is a word that ends in *-ing* and names an activity. Gerunds, therefore, are used as nouns in sentences, not as verbs. (A verb shows action – what people or things do – or connects nouns and pronouns to words that describe or identify them in a sentence.)

What makes gerunds confusing is these same *-ing* words CAN be used as verbs when they demonstrate the “action” in the sentence. In other words, what the subject is doing, thinking, feeling, and so on.

Remember gerunds are used as nouns when they name an activity. Also, possessive pronouns (his, my, our, your, her, their, its) can be used before gerunds.

Example: Your singing is something which inspires people.

Singing is a gerund in this sentence because (1) it is an *-ing* ending word that names an activity, (2) it is preceded by a possessive pronoun (your), and (3) it acts as a noun (the subject of the sentence).

Notice how possessive pronouns (PP) can mark *-ing* words as gerunds in these sentences:

1. Her shopping is causing financial troubles in the family.
PP
2. It was his coaching that inspired thousands of fans.
PP
3. During the swim meet my timing was off.
PP

Practice Exercise: Label the possessive pronouns (PP) and underline the gerunds in these sentences.

1. Tom enjoyed your dancing in the high school play.
2. Their playing together means a lot to many families.
3. Sue told us that her cooking had won several awards.
4. Because of the humming outside the window, we couldn't sleep.
5. Running errands is how I will spend this Saturday.
6. I like skiing, golfing, and fishing.
7. For polishing wood furniture, you should use lemon oil.
8. Jason's working every weekend means we seldom go anywhere.
9. Driving to work takes me about 45 minutes each way.
10. Ken loves baking his own bread from scratch.

Identifying and Using Gerunds – KEY to Practice Exercises

PP

1. Tom enjoyed your dancing in the high school play.

PP

2. Their playing together means a lot to many families.

PP

3. Sue told us that her cooking had won several awards.

4. Because of the humming outside the window, we couldn't sleep.
(“Humming” follows a noun marker – *the*.)

5. Running errands is how I will spend this Saturday.
(“Running” is the subject of the sentence.)

6. I like skiing, golfing, and fishing.
(These are all activities “I” enjoy.)

7. For polishing wood furniture, you should use lemon oil.
(“Polishing” follows the preposition *for*.)

8. Jason's working every weekend means we seldom go anywhere.
(“Working” is the subject of this sentence.)

9. Driving to work takes me about 45 minutes each way.
(“Driving” is the subject of this sentence.)

10. Ken loves baking his own bread from scratch.
(The activity that Ken loves is *baking*.)