

Unit 4

Lesson: Verbals and Verbal Phrases

Learning Target

- Explain the function of verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives) in general and their function in particular sentences.

Verbals and Verbal Phrases

A **phrase** is a word group that does NOT have both a subject and a verb and that functions as a part of speech, such as a noun or modifier (adjective or adverb). There are many different kinds of phrases. You can enliven your writing by using phrases to vary your syntax and add detail.

A **verbal** is a verb form that is used as a noun, adjective, or adverb. A **verbal phrase** is a word group that contains a verbal and its modifiers and complements and that acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

A **participle** is a verb form, often ending in *-ing*, that can be used as an adjective. A **participial phrase** includes a participle and any modifiers or objects of the participle.

There are eight planets **revolving around the sun**. [The phrase modifies *planets*.]

Casting a silvery light, the stars glow brightly tonight. [The phrase modifies *stars*.]

A **gerund** is a verb form ending in *-ing* that is used as a noun. A **gerund phrase** includes a gerund and any modifiers or objects of the gerund.

The twinkling of stars is caused by the **passing of light** through different layers of an atmosphere in motion. [*The twinkling of stars* is a gerund phrase acting as the subject of the sentence. The gerund phrase *the passing of light* is the object of the preposition *by*.]

An **infinitive** is a verb form that is preceded by *to* and that can be used as a noun, adjective, or adverb. An **infinitive phrase** includes an infinitive and any modifiers or objects of the infinitive.

To study astronomy is my goal. [The phrase is a noun that is the subject of the sentence.]

We will use a telescope **to see the rings of Saturn**. [The phrase is an adverb modifying *will use*.]

Subjects **to study** include galaxies and our solar system. [The phrase is an adjective that modifies *subjects*.]

Check Your Understanding

Identify each boldface word group below as a *participial phrase*, a *gerund phrase*, or an *infinitive phrase*. Then say whether it functions as a *noun*, *adjective*, or *adverb*.

1. **Shaking with laughter**, Jack replayed the video. *participial phrase, adjective*
2. Are you willing **to help out at the fundraiser**? *infinitive phrase, adverb*
3. **Going to the store** should take less than an hour. *gerund phrase, noun*
4. The hummingbirds **flying around the garden** are beautiful. *participial phrase, adjective*
5. Let's find something **to wedge under the short table leg**. *infinitive phrase, adjective*