WHAT IS A PARTICIPLE?
A participle is a verbal that is used as an adjective. A verbal is a word that is based on a verb but does not act as a verb. A participle is used to modify either a noun or a pronoun. For example:

The **barking** dog wanted to come inside. [Here the participle *barking* modifies the dog.]

WHAT IS A PARTICIPIAL PHRASE?
A participial phrase is a phrase that begins with a participle and includes objects or other modifiers. It also acts as an adjective. For example:

**Barking loudly**, the dog wanted to come inside. [Here the participial phrase *barking loudly* modifies the dog.]

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Present and Past Participles

There are two types of participles: present participles and past participles. Present participles end in *-ing*, while past participles end in *-ed, -en, -d, -t*, or *-n*.

A **present participle** is the *-ing* form of a verb when it is used as an **adjective**. Note: a present participle is different from a **gerund**, which is the *-ing* form of a verb when it is used as a **noun**.

The **approaching** deadline hung over the heads of all the people in the office.

Here, *approaching* is an adjective that is used to describe the deadline.

The **leaping** flames from the **burning** building presented the firefighters with the responsibility of protecting other nearby buildings from the **growing** fire.

Here, *leaping, burning, and growing* are verbs used as adjectives to describe a noun (flames, building, and fire respectively) in the sentence, thereby qualifying them as present participles. Although it ends in *-ing, protecting* is not a participle because it is acting as a noun in the sentence (object of the preposition), thereby qualifying it as a gerund.
A **past participle** is the form of a verb ending in -ed, -en, -d, -t, or -n when used as an adjective. Some examples of these types of verbs are: *opened, beaten, baked, burnt,* and *chosen.*

She crawled out the **opened** window to escape the fire.  
Here, *opened* is used as an adjective to describe *window.*

The recipe calls for three **beaten** eggs.  
Here, *beaten* is used as an adjective to describe *eggs.*

One of my favorite foods is **baked** lasagna.  
Here, *baked* is used as an adjective to describe the *lasagna.*

The smell of the **burnt** toast filled the room.  
Here, *burnt* is used as an adjective to describe *toast.*

Margaret loved her **chosen** career as a kindergarten teacher.  
Here, *chosen* is used as an adjective to describe *career.*

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### Participial Phrases

A **participial phrase** is a group of words that begins with a participle and includes objects or modifiers. Participial phrases are **dependent clauses** and are used as adjectives to describe nouns or pronouns.

*Having been an athlete,* Jenny knew that training took a lot of determination.  
Here, *having been an athlete* is a participial phrase that describes Jenny.

*He noticed the girls running to the car to avoid the rain.*  
Here, *running to the car* is a participial phrase that describes the girls.

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### Placement

A **participial phrase** must be placed as close to the noun it modifies as possible in order to avoid possible confusion.

*Leaping through the woods,* his foot landed in a huge puddle of mud.  
*Leaping through the woods,* Josh landed his foot in a huge puddle of mud.

In the first sentence, the subject is not clear because it does not clearly state who is performing the action expressed in the participle *leaping.* This is called a **misplaced modifier.** The word *foot* cannot be the subject because it cannot leap. The second sentence is clearer because a person must be doing the leaping and this sentence names the person as Josh.

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**Note:** For information on how to punctuate participial phrases, refer to the skills pages on *Commas* (Non-essential and Essential Clauses) and *Dependent Clauses.*