

Non-Finite Verbs & “Verbiness”

Finite verb = action verb

- has a subject

Non-finite verb = verbs acting as adjective, adverb or noun

- does not have a subject
- also called “verbals”

Participle = present continuous (-ing) or simple past (-ed) tense of a verb

- *can be a finite or non-finite verb*

Non-finite verb forms:

- **present participle** = *-ing*
 - = an adjective (“present participle adjective”)
 - or a noun (“gerund”)
- **past participle** = *-ed*
 - = an adjective (“past participle adjective”)
- **infinitive** = “to” form of a verb
 - “infinitive” is from Latin for “indefinite” or “unrestricted” because the verb form is not tied to a specific case (person or number)
 - can be an adjective, adverb or noun

- *I **spent** money on a new phone.*
- *My old one is more than **spent**.*
- ***Spending** money on a new phone is annoying.*

***spend** > **spent** =
irregular past participle*

The non-finite verbs do not indicate a direct action, but they convey a “sense” of action. So, when we say,

Learning grammar is boring, but to know a little is quite useful

whereas both “learning” and “to know” are the subjects (nouns) of the two verbs “is”, they convey the action of learning and knowing.

Additionally, while non-finite verbs do not have a subject, they maintain the grammatical properties of finite verbs of objects and complements. Thus, in

Learning grammar is boring

“grammar” is the object of “learning” and thus indicates what is learned (an action)

Participles

verb:	Finite form	Non-finite forms:		
	participle (finite verb form)	present participle adjective	gerund (noun form)	past participle adjective
boil	<i>The water is boiling The water boiled</i>	<i>The boiling water is very hot</i>	<i>Boiling makes water very hot</i>	<i>Boiled water is very hot</i>
cook	<i>Dad is cooking dinner Dad cooked dinner</i>	<i>Dinner cooking on the stove makes me happy</i>	<i>Cooking is fun</i>	<i>Cooked food is better for you than raw food</i>
finish	<i>I am finishing my hw I finished my hw</i>		<i>Finishing is the hardest</i>	<i>I have my homework finished</i>
smile	<i>The boy is smiling The boy smiled</i>	<i>The smiling boy is happy</i>	<i>Smiling makes other people happy</i>	
swim	<i>The dog is swimming fast The dog swam fast</i>	<i>The swimming dog is getting there fast</i>	<i>The dog got there fast by swimming</i>	

Infinitives

The infinitive expresses a state or result of action – not the action itself:

infinitive adjective	infinitive adverb	infinitive noun
<i>soup to serve completes dinner</i>	<i>it is prudent to boil the water</i>	<i>to boil water makes it hot</i>
<i>the best way to cook is baking</i>	<i>I am hoping to cool off tomorrow</i>	<i>I learned how to cook fish</i>
<i>I have homework to finish *</i>	<i>she works to advance her career</i>	<i>We want to go home</i>

* note how the adjective and adverb forms of "to finish" are essentially interchangeable

To test whether the participle or infinitive is an adjective/adverb or noun, remove it from the sentence, and see...

Testing for participle adjective	Testing for participle noun (gerund)	Testing for infinitive modifier or noun
if the sentence <u>is grammatically correct</u> and/or still makes sense, the participle <u>is an adjective</u> , as adjectives <u>are not</u> essential sentence elements	if the sentence <u>is not grammatically correct</u> and/or still makes sense, it is a <u>noun</u> , as nouns <u>are</u> essential sentence elements	if the sentence <u>is not grammatically correct</u> and/or still makes sense, it is a <u>noun</u> , as nouns <u>are</u> essential sentence elements; however, if it is still grammatically correct, then the infinitive is a <u>modifier</u> (adjective or adverb)
Boiled water is hot. remove the participle "boiled": --> Boiled Water is hot. = a valid sentence <-- therefore "boiled" is an <u>adjective</u>	Boiling water takes 5 minutes. remove the participle "boiling": --> Boiling Water takes 5 minutes. = incoherent sentence <-- therefore "boiling" is a <u>noun</u>	To boil water makes it hot. remove the infinitive "to boil": --> To boil Water makes it hot. = incoherent sentence <-- therefore "to boil" is a <u>noun</u> or: I have homework to finish --> I have homework to finish = valid sentence <-- therefore "to finish" is an <u>adjective</u>

“Verbiness”

Participle adjectives, gerunds and infinitives retain their “verbiness”, or their indication of an action:

<i>I enjoy “watching” tennis</i>	“watching” = the action or state of watching
<i>Studying hard pays off</i>	“studying” = the state or action of studying
<i>The time to go is now</i>	“to go” = the state or action of going

Just like **finite verbs**, **non-finite verbs** can have “*complements*”

= adverbs, objects, or prepositional phrases

but they do not have a subject (if so, they’d become a finite-verb)

Let’s review those grammatical forms:

Adverb = usually describes a verb as to *how*, *how much* *where*, *when*, etc.

She runs fast

“fast” describes how she runs

Object = recipient of the action of a verb

direct object = what was acted on by the verb

I gave a book

= “book” is what I “gave”

indirect object = the recipient what was acted on by the verb

I gave her a book

= I gave a book “to her”

Prepositional phrase = a modifying phrase to describe another noun or verb

The keys are on the table by the door.

“on the table” and “by the door” are prepositional phrases

Non-finite verbs can be modified by all of these sentence parts.

Let’s see how:

Verbiness of Participle Adjectives:

- participle adjective indicating an action:

*I prefer my food **cooked***

***Running**, I was still late.*

- participle adjective with an adverb:

*I prefer my food cooked **thoroughly***

- “thoroughly” modifies the “cooked” not the verb “prefer”

- participle adjective with an object:

*Running **home**, I was still late*

- “home” is the object of “running”, which describes “I was still late”

- participle adjective with prepositional phrase*:

*Running **to my house**, I was still late*

- “to my house” = prepositional phrase

Verbiness of Gerunds:

- gerund indicating an action:

***Cooking** takes practice*

- “cooking” = subject (noun) but still indicates the action of “cook”

- gerund with an object:

*Cooking **food** takes practice*

- food = the object of "cooking"
- practice = the object of "takes"

- gerund with an adverb:

*Cooking food **well** takes practice*

Verbiness of Infinitives:

- infinitive as object:

*I learned **to build***

- “to build” = direct object infinitive noun of “learned”

- infinitive with adverb:

*I learned **how to build***

- “how” modifies the infinitive “to build” and not the verb “learned”

- infinitive w/ object:

*I learned **how to build a computer***

- "computer" = the object of infinitive noun "to build"

QuickQuiz:

Exams __ not fun.

- a. is
- b. are

Taking exams __ not fun.

- a. is
- b. are