English as a Second Language (ESL): Verbals

A verbal is a verb form that acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb. The three types of verbals include gerunds, participles, and infinitives.

**Gerunds**

A gerund functions as a noun, usually as the subject or object of the sentence. Gerunds are verb-like in form but end in –ing. For example:

- **Playing** piano is Alex’s favorite hobby. *(acts as subject)*
- **Reading** directions is important before taking a test. *(acts as subject)*
- Sara enjoys **cleaning** her room. *(acts as object)*

**Participles**

A participle functions as an adjective, adding extra information to the sentence. Present participles end in –ing while past participles end in –ed or an irregular form. Participles can appear in the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence.

- **Hoping** to win the prize, John submitted as many raffle tickets as possible. *(present participle)*
- The zookeeper fed the **starving** lions. *(present participle)*
- **Damaged** by the storm, the deck required some repairs. *(past participle)*
- Daniel is **known** for his computer skills. *(past participle)*

**Infinitives**

An infinitive functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb and consists of the word to followed by the base form of the verb (for example, to eat).

- Ann taught her dog **to sit** on command.
- **To prepare** for the party, Donna put on her favorite dress.

** Avoid making split infinitives.** No words should be between the word to and the base form of the verb. For example, the sentence “Be sure to carefully mark each answer” would be better written as “Be sure to mark each answer carefully.”