

# 6

## *Gerund Phrases*

Gerund phrases may perform all the functions that nouns do.

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Subject of verb	Her <b>cleaning the house every day</b> is not necessary.
Object of verb	Her husband appreciates <b>her cleaning the house every day</b> .
Object of preposition:	
In prepositional object	Her husband insists on <b>her cleaning the house every day</b> .
In adverbial phrase	By <b>cleaning the house every day</b> she is pleasing her husband.
Subjective complement (predicate noun)	What her husband insists on is <b>her cleaning the house every day</b> .
Appositive	Her husband insists on one thing— <b>her cleaning the house every day</b> .

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### 6-1

#### FORMS OF GERUNDS

Gerunds are participial forms used in noun function. All forms of the participle may be used except the past participle. Like the participle, the gerund may be made negative by placing **not** before it.

#### General Forms

Present participle—**offering**

Passive progressive—**being offered**

These forms express present, past or future time, depending on the time of the main verb.

Supply the active or the passive gerund form of the verb in parentheses.

- EXAMPLE:** a. (Be) Being honest at all times is not always easy.  
 b. The aging couple are counting on (help) being helped financially by their children.  
 c. The boy was fired for (not come) not coming to work on time.
1. (Tell) \_\_\_\_\_ a little white lie is sometimes preferable to (tell) \_\_\_\_\_ the absolute truth.
  2. Special forms are required for (record) \_\_\_\_\_ that information.
  3. He doesn't like (drive) \_\_\_\_\_ to work; he prefers (take) \_\_\_\_\_ the bus.
  4. He denies (have) \_\_\_\_\_ anything to do with the accused man.
  5. After (interview) \_\_\_\_\_ for the job, you will be required to take an aptitude test.
  6. On (notify) \_\_\_\_\_ that he had won a large sum of money in the Sweepstakes, he couldn't believe his good fortune.
  7. I don't enjoy (shop) \_\_\_\_\_ in crowded stores.
  8. He won't tolerate (tell) \_\_\_\_\_ what to do.
  9. My uncle, who is a lawyer, has often dreamed about (make) \_\_\_\_\_ a judge.
  10. (Not do) \_\_\_\_\_ one's work properly may be worse than (not do) \_\_\_\_\_ it at all.
  11. Please refrain from (smoke) \_\_\_\_\_ in this vehicle.
  12. I am used to (eat) \_\_\_\_\_ a substantial breakfast in the morning.

### Perfect Forms

Active--**having offered, having been offering**

Passive--**having been offered**

These forms emphasize the completion of one event before another.

These forms emphasize the completion of one event before another. In most cases, the general forms are also possible.

Supply the perfect active or passive form of the verb in parentheses.

- EXAMPLE:** a. I seem to remember (do) having done this exercise before.  
 b. After (clear) having been cleared through customs, he immediately took a taxi to his hotel.
1. She reproached her husband for (not. tell) \_\_\_\_\_ her about his business losses.
  2. His (marry) \_\_\_\_\_ twice before made her hesitate about accepting his marriage proposal.

3. Your (help) \_\_\_\_\_ us when we were in trouble will never be forgotten.
4. After (just recover) \_\_\_\_\_ from his long illness, the unfortunate man was hit by a car.
5. We appreciated (have) \_\_\_\_\_ this opportunity to visit with you.
6. After his holiday was all over, he regretted (spend) \_\_\_\_\_ so much money for so little pleasure.
7. I can't understand his (not call) \_\_\_\_\_ me while he was in town.
8. He received a substantial raise for (find) \_\_\_\_\_ a more efficient way of manufacturing the company's product.
9. His (be) \_\_\_\_\_ in prison made it hard for him to get a job.

## 6-2

### "SUBJECTS" IN GERUND PHRASES

In gerund phrases, as well as in the grammatical structures taken up in the following chapters, original subjects and objects in full sentences are often changed in form. Thus the full sentence **The hunter shot the birds** becomes the gerund phrase **the hunter's shooting of the birds**. A form like **the hunter's**, which represents the original subject, will be referred to in this and following chapters as the "*subject*"; a form like **of the birds**, which represents the original object, will be referred to as the "*object*."

A gerund phrase may be used without its "subject" included in the phrase, or it may contain a "subject" in inflected 's form or in prepositional form.

#### No "Subject" Included in the Gerund Phrase

The agent for such a gerund phrase may be:

1. Understood as a generic person (**anyone, a person, people, etc.**)—**Playing with guns is dangerous.**
2. Understood from the general context—**He suggested eating dinner at the airport.**
3. Provided in another part of the sentence—**On seeing the damage he had done, the child felt ashamed.** (The agent of seeing is **child**, the *subject* of the main verb.): **We thanked them for making such a generous contribution.** (The agent of making is **them**, the *object* of the main verb.)

Make a "subjectless" gerund phrase out of the words in parentheses. Make whatever changes or additions are necessary.

EXAMPLE: a. (fish, this lake) is forbidden.

Fishing in this lake is forbidden.

- b. Our people insist on (represent, it, government).

Our people insist on being represented in the government.

1. He doesn't enjoy (drive, night).

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2. (bring up, that subject) will only cause trouble.

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3. Her daughter's chores are (make, beds) and (wash, dishes).

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4. (criticize, by anyone) hurts his feelings.

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5. A law once prohibited Americans from (make, or, buy, liquor).

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6. The city official denied (do, anything, improper).

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7. I look forward to (see, you, next week).

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8. She scolded the cook for (not, put, enough salt, soup).

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9. He suggested (take, long walk, early, morning).

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10. (Fly, in, airplane) can now be almost as comfortable as (sit, in, hotel lobby).

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11. We appreciated (be, able, see, you, again).

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12. Please refrain from (talk, driver, while, bus, be, in motion).

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13. (Tip, the waiters, ten to fifteen percent) is the custom here.

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14. She finished (iron, clothes, few minutes ago).

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15. Did you enjoy (visit, White House)?

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**“Subject”  
in Inflected Possessive Form**

The girl resents *her sister's* getting more attention than she does.  
The idea of *Harold's* getting a job as a traveling salesman doesn't appeal to his wife.

Informal usage, however, permits the unchanged form of a noun, or the object form of a personal pronoun in a gerund phrase after a verb or a preposition.

We can't understand **them** doing a thing like that.  
I don't approve of a **woman** walking by herself at night.

If the “subject” represents a thing, or an idea, the unchanged form of a noun is generally preferred—**Instead of *her health* improving after the operation, it got worse.**

make a gerund phrase out of the words in parentheses, using the inflected possessive form for the “subject” of the gerund.

**EXAMPLE:** a. The doctor recommended (we, move, dryer climate).

The doctor recommended our moving to a dryer climate.

b : (the general, slap, wounded soldier) caused quite a scandal.

The general's slapping a wounded soldier caused quite a scandal.

1. (they, break off, negotiations, so soon) was quite unexpected.

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2. (the, return, reward money) surprised the donor.

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3. I can't understand (they, detect, advice, their lawyer).

**CAUTION**

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4. No one was aware of his presence because of (he, enter, room, so quietly).

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5. The doctor suggested (he, see, psychiatrist).

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6. I detest (he, boast, his children).

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7. I can't imagine (he, do, anything wrong).

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8. He has always resented (his father, tell him, what to do).

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**"Subject" an OF Phrase**

A gerund phrase with an of phrase "subject" is usually introduced by **the**. Such an of phrase "subject" occurs mostly with intransitive verbs—**The shouting of the children disturbed his sleep**. If the subject represents a live being, it may be put in either an of phrase or in 's possessive form—**the shouting of the children** or **the children's shouting**. However, only the inflected form is used if the "subject" is a personal pronoun—**Their shouting disturbed his sleep**); and only the of phrase is used if the "subject" is long—**The shouting of the men in the tavern disturbed his sleep**.

Make a gerund phrase out of the words in parentheses, using an of phrase for the "subject." Note where the 's possessive form may also be used.

**EXAMPLE:** a. He was awakened by (the dog, bark).

He was awakened by the barking of the dog.

(also He was awakened by the dog's barking.)

b. (the pipes, burst) was caused by the extreme cold.

The bursting of the pipes was caused by the extreme cold.

1. She was deeply touched by (the wounded men, suffer).

2. All American pupils learn about (Pilgrims, land, at, Plymouth Rock, 1620).

3. (lake, freeze over) occurred earlier than usual this year.

4. (leaves, rustle, in, wind) was like music to him.

5. (her daughters, cough, night) disturbed her sleep.

6. (a bomb, explode, their front lawn) frightened them.

7. The political candidate was gratified by (the crowd, cheer).

8. (the people, gamble, at, casino) was repulsive to the old lady.

9. Some newspapers failed to report (the prisoners, riot).

## 6-3

**THE + GERUND + OF PHRASE "OBJECT"**

If **the** precedes the gerund, the "object" is contained within an **of** phrase.

**The** storing **of** the merchandise became a problem after the warehouse burned down.

**but** Storing **the** merchandise became a problem after the warehouse burned down.

Usually the phrase beginning with **the** has stronger noun force. In some gerund phrases, the **of** phrase "object" cannot be used—**Taking drugs is detrimental to the health.**

Make a gerund phrase out of the words in parentheses, using an **of** phrase "object." Note where it is also possible to use an "object" without **of**.

**EXAMPLE:** a. The school administration is opposed to (shorten, school year).

The school administration is opposed to the shortening of the school year.

also The School administration is opposed to shortening the school year.

b. (bribe, officials) is a very serious offense.

The bribing of officials is a very serious offense.

also Bribing officials is a very serious offense.

1. The office boy is responsible for (mail, packages).

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2. (light, torches, night) is a beautiful ceremony in Hawaii.

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3. (address, those letters) will take a long time.

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4. The world was shocked to hear about (loot and burn, besieged town).

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5. (place, wreaths, servicemen's graves) takes place on Memorial Day.

---

6. The little girl was puzzled by (come and go, so many people).

---

7. (burn, trash, outdoors) should be done in a safe place.

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8. Because of the shortage of water, (water, gardens) can be done only at specified times.

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9. (build, moderately-priced houses) has had to stop for a while.

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10. There are mechanical devices for (open and close, these doors).

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11. (shooting, those rare birds) appalled us.

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## 6-4

### GERUND PHRASE OBJECTS OF VERBS

Certain verbs may be followed by gerund phrase objects. The most common of these verbs are: **acknowledge, admit, anticipate, appreciate, avoid, cannot help, delay, deny, enjoy, finish, give up (= stop), justify, keep on, mention, miss, postpone, practice, put off, recommend, resent, resist, risk, stop, suggest, understand.**

The perfect gerund is often used after these verbs to emphasize time that precedes that of the main verb.

Make gerund phrases out of the words in parentheses. Note where perfect gerunds may also be used.

EXAMPLE: a. I enjoy (play, piano).

I enjoy playing the piano. (I is the "subject" of the gerund)

b. We appreciate (you, help, our friends, last night).

We appreciate your helping (or having helped) our friends last night.

(You is the "subject" of the gerund)

1. I anticipated (have, some trouble, with them).

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2. He admitted (steal, the car).

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3. She always avoids (talk, that subject).

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4. He denied (act, improperly, the matter).

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5. The child enjoys (listen, fairy tales).

---

6. They finished (paint, house) yesterday.

---

7. The government is trying to justify (increase, income taxes).

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8. You must practice (play, piano) if you want to be good at it.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. I recommend (you, study, report, very carefully).  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. He bitterly resented (dismissed, without any reason).  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. After their quarrel, they stopped (talk, each other).  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. I can understand (you, want, vacation, now).  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. We can't help (feel, sorry, him).  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. The patient risks (lose, eyesight, altogether) if the operation on his eyes is not successful.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 6-5

## GERUND PHRASE OBJECTS OF PREPOSITIONS

Gerund phrases may function as prepositional objects (*We plan on having a housewarming party soon*) or as objects in adverbial prepositional phrases (*After listening to the news, she started to prepare dinner*).

### Gerund Phrases as Prepositional Objects

Supply the required preposition and the gerund form of the verb in parentheses.

- EXAMPLE: a. He was accused (kill) \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ killing  
his neighbor.
- b. I disapprove (he, do) \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ his  
\_\_\_\_\_ doing \_\_\_\_\_ business that way.

- I am looking forward (see) \_\_\_\_\_  
you again.<sup>1</sup>
- Can I plan (see) \_\_\_\_\_  
the new house soon?
- Nothing will deter him (continue) \_\_\_\_\_  
his experiment.

<sup>1</sup>To is a preposition after the verbs *look forward*, *object*, *plead guilty*, as well as after the participial adjectives used *accustomed*, *opposed*.

4. He pleaded guilty (attack) \_\_\_\_\_  
the man.
5. The doctor warned him (take) \_\_\_\_\_  
too many sleeping pills.
6. She reproached her husband (never take) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ her out at night.
7. She is always complaining (have) \_\_\_\_\_  
too much work to do.
8. We are opposed (they receive) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ the contract for the building.
9. They argued (he, take) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ his secretary to lunch so often.
10. Would you object (I, go) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ away for a few days?
11. We count (be given) \_\_\_\_\_  
the same rights as the others.
12. The bad weather prevented them (continue) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ with the construction.
13. No one can blame you (not want) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ to go through such an experience again.
14. He was suspected (falsify) \_\_\_\_\_  
the records.
15. He insisted (pay) \_\_\_\_\_  
the entire bill, although we protested (he, do) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ this.

### Gerund Phrase Objects in Adverbial Prepositional Phrases

Make gerund phrases out of the words in parentheses.

**EXAMPLE:** a. On (hear, bad news), she began to weep uncontrollably.  
On hearing the bad news, she began to weep uncontrollably.

b. We will begin the service by (say, special prayer).  
We will begin the service by saying a special prayer.

1. You must cover the pan before (put, it, oven).

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2. Soon after (hit, speeding car) the injured man was taken to the hospital.

---

3. Because of (he, fail, to pay, his taxes), he was given a prison term.

---

4. The thief crept into the house without (see, by anyone).

---

5. He was given a ticket for (drive, without, license).

---

6. The bright young boy advanced quickly from (clean, the shop) to (manage, it).

---

7. The members voted in favor of (maintain, status quo).

---

8. In the event of (he, fail, to show up), we have a substitute speaker ready.

---

9. For the sake of (keep, peace, in, family), she never contradicts her husband.

---

10. Far from (deny, charge), he admitted very proudly that it was he that had blown up the bridge.

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## 6-6

### ADJECTIVES-FROM-ADVERBS IN GERUND PHRASES

An adverb may remain unchanged when used in initial or final position in a gerund phrase.

His wife was shocked at his *recklessly* breaking the law.

His wife was shocked at his breaking the law *recklessly*.

Often, however, adverbs are transformed to adjectives that precede the gerund.

His wife was shocked at his *reckless* breaking of the law.

This adjective form is required in the **the + gerund + of** phrase construction—*The constant dripping of the water irritated her.*

In each set of sentences, replace **this** with a gerund phrase made from the *first sentence*. Change the adverb in the *first sentence* to an adjective preceding the gerund.

**EXAMPLE:** a. He handled the affair discreetly.

The company appreciated *this*.

The company appreciated his discreet handling of the affair.

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b. The hotel was closed unexpectedly.

*This* left the tourists with no place to stay.

The unexpected closing of the hotel left the tourists with no place to stay.

---

1. Her mother constantly meddled in her affairs.  
*This* was a source of great annoyance to her.
- 
- 

2. He coughed violently.  
*This* kept him awake all night.
- 
- 

3. These figures are being checked carefully.  
*This* will take a long time.
- 
- 

4. He stole cars senselessly.  
His parents couldn't understand *this*.
- 
- 

5. All the prisoners were ruthlessly killed.  
He was shocked at *this*.
- 
- 

6. The waves crashed loudly against the rocks.  
*This* prevented him from concentrating on his work.
- 
- 

7. The couple next door quarreled continuously.  
They complained about *this*.
- 
- 

8. He drank and gambled excessively.  
His wife divorced him because of *this*.
- 
- 

9. The animals in the zoo reared fiercely.  
*This* frightened the young child.
- 
- 

10. He stabbed his friend fatally.  
He was arrested for *this*.
- 
- 

11. They disbanded the army completely.  
*This* marked the end of the war.
- 
-

## 6-7 REVIEW OF GERUND PHRASES

Replace **this** with a gerund phrase made from the *first sentence*.

### Gerund Phrase as Subject

1. I asked the boss for a raise.  
*This* didn't do any good.
- 

2. She watered the plants every day.  
*This* made them grow faster.
- 

3. He looked at me suspiciously.  
*This* made me feel uncomfortable.
- 

4. The thief returned the money.  
*This* surprised everyone.
- 

5. The boy drives recklessly.  
*This* can cause an accident.
- 

### Gerund Phrase as Object of Verb

6. I asked the boss for a raise.  
The boss didn't like *this*.
- 

7. She watered the plants every day.  
I appreciated *this*.
- 

8. He looked at me suspiciously.  
I couldn't understand *this*.
- 

9. The thief returned the money.  
The thief admitted *this*.
-

10. The boy drives recklessly.  
The boy's parents mentioned *this*.
- 

### Gerund Phrase as Object of Preposition

11. I asked the boss for a raise.  
My wife laughed at me for *this*.
- 

12. She watered the plants every day.  
Her father praised her for *this*.
- 

13. He looked at me suspiciously.  
I was annoyed at *this*.
- 

14. The thief returned the money.  
We all remarked about *this*.
- 

15. The boy drives recklessly.  
The boy's parents are concerned about *this*.
- 

## 6-8

### USING GERUND PHRASES FOR SUMMARIZING

Study the following paragraphs carefully. Underline the parts of each paragraph that are required for completing the summary sentence. Use your own words as much as possible. (Do *not* write more than one sentence for each paragraph.)

During these bewildering years President Hoover at first tried to organize national optimism by summoning business executives to Washington to declare that conditions were fundamentally sound and that there would be no wage cutting. This didn't work. Then for a time he was inactive, trusting to the supposedly self-correcting processes of the market. This didn't work. Then, convinced that the financial panic which was simultaneously raging in Europe was the worst source of trouble, he organized an international moratorium in war debts and reparations—a fine stroke of diplomacy which alleviated matters only briefly. Then he set up the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to bring federal aid to hard-pressed banks and businesses—while steadfastly refusing, as a matter of principle, to put federal funds at the disposal of individual persons who were in trouble. . . .

Frederick Lewis Allen, *The Big Change*, 1952.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Excerpt from p. 146 in *The Big Change* by Frederick Lewis Allen (Harper & Row, 1952).

Summary sentence—President Hoover thought he could alleviate the ills of the depression by \_\_\_\_\_

then by \_\_\_\_\_

then by \_\_\_\_\_

and finally by \_\_\_\_\_

It is a common unfairness in controversy to place what the writer dislikes or opposes in a generally odious category. The humanist dismisses what he dislikes by calling it *romantic*; the liberal by calling it *fascist*; the conservative, by calling it *communistic*. These terms tell the reader nothing. What is *piety* to some will be bigotry to others. *Non-Catholics* would rather be called *Protestants* than *heretics*. What is *right-thinking* except a designation for those who agree with the writer? Social security measures become *creeping socialism*; industrial organizations, *forces of reaction*; investigations into communism, *witch hunts*; prison reform, *coddling*; progressive education, *fads and frills*. Such terms are intended to block thought by an appeal to prejudice and associative habits. Three steps are necessary before such epithets have real meaning. First, they must be defined; second, it must be shown that the object to which they are applied actually possesses these qualities; third, it must be shown that the possession of such qualities in this particular situation is necessarily undesirable.

Robert Gorham Davis, *A Handbook for English*.<sup>3</sup>

Summary sentence—The three steps that serve to give epithets meaning are: (1) \_\_\_\_\_-ing

(2) \_\_\_\_\_-ing

(3) \_\_\_\_\_-ing

<sup>3</sup>From *Handbook for English*. Copyright 1941, by the President and Fellows of Harvard University and reprinted by permission of the author.

