

JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PRESENT PARTICIPLE

Present participles are verbs which usually end in *-ing*. These verbs can be used in conjunction with other verbs.

I am **going** to the store.

I will be **traveling** to Chicago.

Must we be **singing**?

When used with another verb or auxiliary, the present participle is not a free modifier but is bound to another clause. Thus, in this sentence

Joe is **running** to his house.

running is bound to the auxiliary verb *is* and cannot be called a free modifier.

But in this sentence

Running to his house, Joe was tired.

Running is in its own verb phrase (VP) and is being used as a free modifier. *Joe was tired* is the base clause in the sentence.

Now, tell if the bold words are free modifiers or bound verbs.

1. My typewriter is **making** a very strange noise.
2. **Making** a strange noise, my typewriter suddenly stopped.
3. The **running** boy is tired.

Answers: 1. bound
 2. free
 3. bound

Did #3 fool you? It may have; a present participle is also bound to a sentence when it modifies a noun in the sentence. Thus, in #3 *running* describes the boy.

The **running** boy

running is also bound by the word *the* (an article) and by the word *boy*. Thus, it is trapped or bound up in the subject of the sentence.

1. *running* is not set off by commas.
2. *running* is not free.
3. *running* is not a part of the main verb.

Practice Exercise

Tell if the underlined word is free, bound, or part of the main verb (MV).

1. Whenever the snow falls, our backyard becomes a glistening picture.
2. Seventeen boxes, containing pencils, were delivered to the storeroom.
3. Hitting is the business of Amos Otis.
4. My neighbor was trying to start his car in the wet weather.
5. The train derailed, crashing into the empty factory.

- Answers:
1. bound (modifier)
 2. free (modifier)
 3. bound (subject)
 4. bound (main verb)
 5. free (modifier)