

Participle clauses

Introduction



Realising he was late for work, he decided to run.

Definition

Participle clauses are a type of adverbial clause which allow us to say something with fewer words.

Construction

	Affirmative	Negative
Present participle - the subject in each clause is the same.	Watching TV, Jack fell asleep. [Jack was watching TV] Watching TV, Jack's wife came home. ✗	Not knowing what to do, he asked for help.
Past participle - the meaning is passive.	Watched so closely, the presenter felt nervous. [The audience was watching him.]	Not known for his punctuality, he arrived late as usual.

Perfect participle - one action is before another.	Having watched a film, Jack went to bed. [active]	Not having known him for long, she hesitated to ask him for help.
	Having been watched all day, the presenter felt more used to it. [passive]	Not having been known for his generosity, his colleagues were surprised when he invited them to dinner.

Note that:

With present and perfect participle clauses, the sentences can be inverted:

Seeing the train arrive, she started to hurry.
She started to hurry, seeing the train arrive.

Not having seen the cable, she tripped over it.
She tripped over the cable, not having seen it.

The participle clause sometimes has a subject:

This company has a lot of longstanding employees, some having worked here for more than 40 years.
The weather being good, they decided to have lunch outdoors.
The report written, he turned to his next task.

Note that this structure is formal, and rare in conversation.

Uses

Use	Examples
To explain why	Hoping to find a solution, we called an emergency meeting.
	I didn't take a pen and paper to the workshop, knowing that they'd be provided.
	Having written down the wrong time, I turned up an hour early!

<p>To talk about a time - an alternative to using words such as 'while' and 'as soon as'</p>	<p>Chatting with my colleagues at lunch, I suddenly remembered I had a meeting.</p> <p>Hearing that Julia had got the manager's job, I decided to resign.</p> <p>Walking past the church on my left, I followed a narrow street to the main square.</p> <p>Seen from a distance, he looked/looks like his brother.</p>
<p>In conditional sentences, particularly when giving recommendations or advice</p>	<p>Heated gently, the soup retains its flavour.</p> <p>Serviced regularly, this car will go on for years.</p> <p>Better paid, they'd probably work harder.</p> <p>Dealt with sooner, it wouldn't have got as bad as this.</p>
<p>To talk about something happening at the same time as the activity in the main clause or to give further information about the main clause Note: Mainly seen in formal literature</p>	<p>The people in this team are quite young, most being under twenty-five.</p> <p>Her voice getting louder, she continued to tell him how she felt.</p>

Participle clauses after conjunctions and prepositions

Present and perfect participle clauses are often used after certain conjunctions and prepositions. Here are some examples:

Before **telling** everyone the date, could you make sure there's a room available?

After **having read** all my emails, I didn't have much time for anything else.

On **seeing** there was no one in the room, he realised he'd got the time wrong.

Mind the gap **when** **boarding** the train.

While/whilst **accepting** the need for new desks, the management didn't want to pay for them.

Participle clauses after a noun

Also known as 'reduced relative clauses', these give information about a noun. They use present or past participles, including 'being'.

Present participles are used for a variety of tenses, not just the present continuous:

The man **organising** the conference is my colleague. [the man who is organising..]

Passengers **arriving** from the EU need to queue here. [who arrive, or who are arriving]

She was the one **talking** to Harry. [who was talking]

Past participles are used with a passive meaning:

Did you read the report **written** by the HR department? [which was written]

He likes shoes **made** in Italy. [which are made]

'Being' + past participle is used with a continuous passive meaning:

The room **being decorated** at the moment is the manager's office. [which is...]

The subject **being discussed** when he arrived was the delayed delivery. [which was...]

Examples



She broke her arm **playing** tennis.



Noticing the time, she decided to head back to the office.



Watered regularly, these plants will produce flowers all summer.



The dinner all **prepared**, she decided to relax for an hour or so.



He decided to get a new car after **breaking** down yet again.



The couple **living** next door last year were really friendly.



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