

### 3. ADJECTIVES

**Adjectives** provide us with information about nouns and pronouns. Like nouns, adjectives may be single words or larger, more elaborate groups of words. The simplest adjectives are called **articles**, and there are three of them: *a*, *an*, and *the*.

While these articles give little information, they do imply that we have not spoken of the noun before (Once upon a time there was *a* boy...) or that we have mentioned the noun previously (Suddenly *the* horse...).

More specific adjectives begin to give useful information about a noun or pronoun. The adjective could, for example, describe, show ownership, give a comparison, tell the place in a sequence, indicate number, or otherwise distinguish this noun or pronoun from others.

<i>big</i>	<i>empty</i>	<i>yellow</i>	<i>several</i>	<i>darker</i>	<i>my</i>
<i>five</i>	<i>tenth</i>	<i>expensive</i>	<i>fastest</i>	<i>these</i>	<i>no</i>

#### THE INFINITIVE PHRASE

In order to create some of our more elaborate adjectives, we again look to the verb forms we have already studied. In the previous chapter we learned how the infinitive could be used as a noun. Let us now look at its use as an adjective.

The infinitive may appear alone or as part of an **infinitive phrase**. As it did when it was a noun, it may have its own modifiers, complements, or objects. Also, the infinitive may sometimes appear without the word *to*.

We had every reason *to go*.

My chance *to win* was one in a million.

We watched the sailboat [*to*] *sink*.

His efforts *to quiet his baby brother* were amusing but fruitless.

Everything *to do before Friday* was posted on the refrigerator.

We collected newspaper *to be recycled by the Ecology Club*.

#### THE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

The next grammatical unit acting as an adjective is the prepositional phrase. See Chapter 5 for a list of common prepositions. In that chapter we will look more closely at the many specific roles of the prepositional phrase, but for now simply understand that it may be used as an adjective. Another name for the prepositional phrase used as an adjective is the **adjective phrase**.

Not everyone *from Holland* wears wooden shoes.

The author *of the best-selling novel* was giving autographs.

The twins *in matching outfits* simply couldn't be told apart.

## THE PRESENT PARTICIPIAL PHRASE

The next set of adjectives comes from the present participle form of the verb. While these might look very much like the gerunds you have learned about, you must keep in mind that gerunds were nouns, not adjectives. The present participial phrase gives us more information about nouns and pronouns, as all adjectives do, and it also is able to go in several places in the sentence, thus adding new stylistic possibilities to your writing.

The present participle form of a verb, you recall, ends in *-ing*: *being, going, hearing, having*. It is used in combination with forms of the verb *to be* to make the progressive tenses (page 8).

The children are *squealing*.

The snow had been *falling*.

My dog was *howling*.

With a simple rearrangement of the words, we can begin to talk about *the squealing children, the falling snow, and my howling dog*. The present participle verb form has become an adjective.

The *squealing* children seem to enjoy the new gym equipment.

We watched the *falling* snow as it cast a magical mood over Main Street.

Mr. Hanson was kept awake all night by my *howling* dog.

As a verb, the present participle is often followed by a prepositional phrase, a direct object, even a noun clause. Let's begin with a simple example.

The duchess was *walking in the garden*.

If we wished to use the italicized words as a modifier, we could not place it in the usual adjective "slot" between the article and the noun it modifies. We would not write *The walking in the garden duchess....* Instead, we might begin a sentence with the modifier, or place it right after the noun it modifies.

*Walking in the garden*, the duchess noticed that the roses were beginning to bloom.

The duchess, *walking in the garden*, noticed that the roses were beginning to bloom.

Each of these modifiers is now called a **present participial phrase**. Here are two more examples of how a present-participle verb form becomes a present participial phrase.

The scuba diver was *picking up shells from the ocean floor*.

The scuba diver, *picking up shells from the ocean floor*, discovered a Spanish coin.

He was *thinking that he would never see her again*.

He looked longingly into her eyes, *thinking that he would never see her again*.

**Note:** The present participle *having* may combine with a past participle verb form, to produce what is called the **present perfect participle**.

*Having finished our chores*, we headed off to the swimming pool.

**Grammar alert:** Make sure that the participial phrase actually has a noun or pronoun to modify, and that it is clear what it is modifying. A **dangling modifier** has nothing to modify, and a **misplaced modifier** is too far away from what it modifies and seems to modify something else.

- Dangling:** Skiing down the mountain, the view was wonderful.  
**Correct:** Skiing down the mountain, we enjoyed the wonderful view.
- Misplaced:** I saw the cutest family of ducks walking to school yesterday.  
**Correct:** Walking to school yesterday, I saw the cutest family of ducks.  
**Correct:** As I was walking to school yesterday, I saw the cutest family of ducks.

## THE PAST PARTICIPIAL PHRASE

Like the present participle, the past participle may be used as an adjective. While the present participle tells what a noun or pronoun is or was *doing*, the past participle tells what *was done* to a noun or pronoun. (Notice that *doing* and *done* are the present participle and past participle forms of *do*, respectively.)

The past participle form of a verb has several possible endings: *-ed*, *-en*, *-t*, *-n*, *-d*, and others. It is used in combination with forms of the verb *to have* to make the perfect tenses (page 8).

The dog has *ripped* my science report.  
 They had *stolen* the painting.  
 He has *made* the bookcase by hand.

Again, we may easily take this information and refer to *my ripped science report*, *the stolen painting*, and *the handmade bookcase*. The past participle verb form has become an adjective.

I easily mended my *ripped* science report with Scotch tape.  
 The police found the *stolen* painting in a dumpster nearby.  
 His *handmade* bookcase sold quickly at the craft fair.

As you learned in Chapter 1, "Verbs," the past participle is also the form used to create the passive voice (page 13). Here is a sentence in the passive voice.

The peaches were *nearly frozen by the sudden drop in temperature*.

The italicized words may be removed to become an adjective called a **past participial phrase**.

*Nearly frozen by the sudden drop in temperature*, the peaches brought only a fraction of their value at the market.

Here are two more examples of how a past participle verb form becomes a past participial phrase.

The house was *destroyed in the hurricane*.  
*Destroyed in the hurricane*, the house lay in ruins by the sea.

His uncle was *taken hostage by the hijackers*.  
*Taken hostage by the hijackers*, my uncle was barely able to escape.

Like the present participial phrase, the past participial phrase may often be written at more than one place in the sentence. Here are two variations on the above example.

My uncle, *taken hostage by the hijackers*, endured twenty-four hours of pure fear.  
 My uncle had quite a vacation, first *taken hostage by the hijackers*, then *lost in the Sahara Desert*, and finally *bitten by a snake in the Amazon*.



A sentence may contain two consecutive participial phrases, one a past and one a present.

*Drenched by the rain and trailing by two runs*, our team was delighted when the umpire called off the game after the third inning.

**Grammar alert:** As was the case with the present participial phrase, make sure that the past participial phrase actually has a noun or pronoun to modify, and that it is clear what it is modifying.

**Dangling:** Exhausted by the hike up the mountain, the lodge was a welcome sight.

**Correct:** Exhausted by the hike up the mountain, we welcomed the sight of the lodge.

**Misplaced:** Destroyed by the bombs, we wept for the city.

**Correct:** We wept for the city destroyed by the bombs.

**THE INFINITIVE PHRASE: SAMPLES**

She never let a chance escape her *to point out the shortcomings of other tribal groups to the greater glory of our own*, a habit that amused Jem rather than annoyed him.

—Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

In the wild state [otters] will play alone for hours with any convenient floating object in the water, pulling it down to let it bob up again, or throwing it with a jerk of the head so that it lands with a splash and becomes a quarry *to be pursued*.

—Gavin Maxwell, *Ring of Bright Water*

Since there was nowhere *to sleep in the port*, Joseph hired some porters from among the young men loafing around the trading post and we left right away for Olinka, some four days march through the bush.

—Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

The grass was so cool and soft to our feet, the air so sweet, and the freedom *to do as we liked* was so pleasant; *to gallop, to lie down, and roll over on our backs, and to nibble the sweet grass*.

—Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*

When it is 75 below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt *to build a fire*.

—Jack London, "To Build a Fire"

**THE PRESENT PARTICIPIAL PHRASE: SAMPLES**

*Landing on his knees, hugging the ball*, he urged himself to ignore the pain.

—Robert Cormier, *The Chocolate War*

The first man, *picking up the end and threading it through the loop of his leg iron*, stood up then, and, *shuffling a little*, brought the chain tip to the next prisoner, who did the same.

—Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

And as usual, Kessa gathered her books, *lingering behind her classmates, hoping for a conversation she could join*.

—Steven Levenkron, *Kessa*

Douglas shut his eyes and saw the idiot suns *dancing on the reverse side of the pinkly translucent lids*.

—Ray Bradbury, *Dandelion Wine*

Lessa curled into a tight knot of bones, *hugging herself to ease the strain across her tense shoulders*.

—Anne McCaffrey, *Dragonflight*

Liliana and Mavis were right in front of Betsey, *talking the talk she couldn't make sense of*.

—Ntozake Shange, *Betsey Brown*

### THE PAST PARTICIPIAL PHRASE: SAMPLES

*Relieved that she has nailed him down at last*, she feels free to go on with the more serious, motherly questions.

—Judith Guest, *Ordinary People*

*Frozen with fear, but fascinated*, the kid peered over the tops of the boxes and drums as the sedan screeched in, coming to a sideways stop.

—Max Allen Collins, *Dick Tracy*

It stood back from the road, *half hidden among the trees*, through which glimpses could be caught of the wide, cool veranda that ran around its four sides.

—Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*

*Having been bitten over a dozen times*, Hammond gave up.

—Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park*

*Driven by a stream of salty oaths, and threatened by the scourging lash of Latinus Mercer*, the slaves gave a good account of themselves and stood firm.

—Clive Cussler, *Treasure*

## ADJECTIVES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE A: infinitive phrases

Accuracy \_\_\_\_\_ Creativity \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** In the spaces below, write infinitive phrases of your own creation. The phrase should modify the noun or pronoun in **bold** print. Notice that you will be graded on both accuracy and creativity.

1. He made every **effort** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. The best way \_\_\_\_\_  
had yet to be found.
3. The **candidate** \_\_\_\_\_  
must have a wide variety of diplomatic skills.
4. Any **attempt** \_\_\_\_\_  
is sure to be met with enthusiasm.
5. The **fabric** \_\_\_\_\_  
must cost under eight dollars a yard.
6. We thawed out the **pork chops** \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Serving on this committee requires a **willingness** \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_.
8. We both saw the **prisoner** \_\_\_\_\_  
(infinitive phrase without the to)  
and \_\_\_\_\_  
(infinitive phrase without the to)
9. She had high **hopes** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
10. Now there is **nothing** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## ADJECTIVES

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### EXERCISE B: reading for infinitives

Accuracy \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Now, read in a good book and find two sentences containing infinitive phrases being used as adjectives (not as adverbs). Write the sentences below. Be able to tell what noun or pronoun the infinitive phrase is modifying. Also tell the book's title and author.

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Book title and author: \_\_\_\_\_



# ADJECTIVES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE E: past participial phrases

Accuracy \_\_\_\_\_ Creativity \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Fill in the blanks in the sentences below with past participial phrases of your own creation. The phrase should modify the noun or pronoun in bold print.

1. The table \_\_\_\_\_ brought almost \$12,000 at the auction.
2. \_\_\_\_\_, the race car driver settled into the driver's seat.
3. I looked at the tree's last remaining leaf, \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The vendor's pushcart, \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_, lay splintered and useless. \_\_\_\_\_, the plumber frantically tumbled with the gushing faucet.
6. The coach, \_\_\_\_\_ but not yet \_\_\_\_\_, gave a rousing halftime speech to the players.
7. Having \_\_\_\_\_, we set out on our long-awaited summer vacation.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ and losing air speed rapidly, the pilot radioed a mayday message.
9. Most people \_\_\_\_\_ will probably just hang up the telephone.

## ADJECTIVES

## EXERCISE F: reading for past participial phrases

Accuracy \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Now, read for a while in a good book and find two sentences which demonstrate the use of the past participial phrase. Be able to tell what noun or pronoun the phrase is modifying. Write the sentences below. Also tell the book's title and author.

Book title and author: \_\_\_\_\_

## THE ADJECTIVE CLAUSE

The final category of adjectives is the **adjective clause**, a group of words containing a verb and a subject to go with it, modifying a noun or pronoun.

Using an adjective clause is a useful way to join two sentences which have a noun or pronoun in common. One of the sentences we will call the *receiver sentence*. It will "receive" the other sentence but will not itself change. The other sentence we will call the *donor sentence*. It will "donate" its information to the receiver sentence but will first have to undergo some changes.

An adjective clause always follows the noun or pronoun it modifies and usually begins with

**a relative pronoun:** *who, whose, whom, which, that*  
**or a relative adverb:** *where, when, why*

Receiver sentence:  
 Donor sentence:  
 Relative pronoun:  
 Final sentence:

Sara Phillips hands out the best candy at Halloween.  
 Sara Phillips lives just next door.  
 who  
 Sara Phillips, who lives just next door, hands out the best candy at Halloween.

Receiver sentence:  
 Donor sentence:  
 Relative pronoun:  
 Final sentence:

The contestant will win a CD.  
 The contestant's name will be drawn from the barrel.  
 whose  
 The contestant whose name will be drawn from the barrel will win a CD.

Receiver sentence:  
 Donor sentence:  
 Relative pronoun:  
 Final sentence:

The man loves children.  
 I am engaged to the man.  
 whom  
 The man to whom I am engaged loves children.

Receiver sentence:  
 Donor sentence:  
 Relative pronoun:  
 Final sentence:

Every flower died.  
 She planted every flower.  
 which/that  
 Every flower which/that she planted died.

Receiver sentence:  
 Donor sentence:  
 Relative adverb:  
 Final sentence:

I'll never forget the restaurant.  
 We first ate Thai food at the restaurant.  
 where  
 I'll never forget the restaurant where we first ate Thai food.

Receiver sentence:  
 Donor sentence:  
 Relative adverb:  
 Final sentence:

Nobody was at the cabin on the day.  
 We arrived on the day.  
 when  
 Nobody was at the cabin on the day when we arrived.

On rare occasions, a relative pronoun may stand for more than a single word or phrase. It might, in fact, stand for an entire sentence.

I bought the first pair of shoes I tried on, which proved to be a mistake.

What proved to be a mistake? (*The fact that*) I bought the first pair of shoes I tried on. The relative pronoun *which* refers to the full independent clause before it.

## ADJECTIVE CLAUSE ISSUES

**Grammar alert:** Deciding on whether the relative pronoun should be *who* or *whom* is easy when you determine what the word it is replacing did in the donor sentence. If it was the subject or predicate nominative, then use *who*. If it was the direct object, indirect object, or object of the preposition, then use *whom*.

**Punctuation alert:** Like an appositive, sometimes an adjective clause is set off from the rest of the sentence by commas, and sometimes it is not. If the noun or pronoun is clear to the reader without the adjective clause, then it may be set off. But if the adjective clause provides important information, separating one from many, then it must not be set off by commas.

My aunt, *who lives in Chicago*, is coming to visit. (I have only the one aunt.)  
My aunt *who lives in Chicago* is coming to visit. (I have more than one aunt.)

**Omitted relative pronoun:** Sometimes the relative pronoun or relative adverb may be omitted. Look at the examples given on the previous page and see where that can be done.

**Summary:** Here is an illustration of how one noun, *canoe*, may be modified by an array of adjectives.

canoe	the	(article)
	narrow	(simple adjective)
	leaking	(simple present participle)
	overturned	(simple past participle)
	to buy	(simple infinitive)
	to use in white water	(infinitive phrase)
	bobbing in the motorboat's wake	(present participial phrase)
	tied to the end of the dock	(past participial phrase)
	which we carried on our shoulders	(adjective clause)

## THE ADJECTIVE CLAUSE: SAMPLES

Night, whose name just frightened me by the sound of it, was giving the crew a tongue lashing.  
—Clive Cussler, *Treasure*

He took up his overcoat from the chair where he had thrown it.  
—Agatha Christie, *The Mystery of the Blue Train*

The two kids that I had seen before left early, which seemed very strange to me.  
—James Herbert, *Fog*



# ADJECTIVES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE C: adjective clauses

Accuracy \_\_\_\_\_ Creativity \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** In the spaces below, write adjective clauses of your own creation. Put commas where they are appropriate. The clauses should modify the words in **bold print**. Notice that all of number 5 is in bold print.

1. Edgar Allan Poe \_\_\_\_\_
2. Any student \_\_\_\_\_  
attended West Point for a short time.
3. Everyone look at that **boy** in the front row \_\_\_\_\_  
will have to fill out these forms.
4. You may return any **shirt** \_\_\_\_\_
5. I couldn't get my hands all the way around the rope \_\_\_\_\_
6. Isn't this the **pond** \_\_\_\_\_?
7. I have circled on my calendar the day \_\_\_\_\_
8. The Leaning Tower of **Pizza** \_\_\_\_\_  
fell down last night.
9. I finally met Liam O'Grady \_\_\_\_\_
10. She is a **woman** \_\_\_\_\_  
but \_\_\_\_\_

## ADJECTIVES

## EXERCISE H: reading for adjective clauses

Accuracy \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Now, read in a good book and find three sentences which contain adjective clauses. Be able to tell what noun or pronoun the clause is modifying. Write the sentences below. Also tell the book's title and author.

Book title and author: \_\_\_\_\_

## ADJECTIVES

## EXERCISE I: adjective review

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Accuracy \_\_\_\_\_ Creativity \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Fill in the blanks below with adjectives modifying the noun or pronoun in **bold print**. Think about whether you would use commas. You do not need to rewrite the original sentence.

1. The **chicken** did not look very appetizing.

\_\_\_\_\_ (past participial phrase)

\_\_\_\_\_ (adjective clause)

2. **Mr. Davis** chased us all the way to the golf course.

\_\_\_\_\_ (two simple adjectives) and \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (present participial phrase)

\_\_\_\_\_ (adjective clause)

3. The Highway Department planted **trees** along our street.

\_\_\_\_\_ (two simple adjectives) and \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (past participial phrase)

\_\_\_\_\_ (adjective clause)

4. We'll give a complimentary pair of tickets to **anyone**.

\_\_\_\_\_ (present participial phrase)

\_\_\_\_\_ (adjective clause)

5. My brand new **tennis racquet** broke the first time I used it.

\_\_\_\_\_ (past participial phrase)

\_\_\_\_\_ (adjective clause)

6. The best **fishing lure** is the jitterbug.

\_\_\_\_\_ (prepositional phrase)

\_\_\_\_\_ (infinitive phrase)

7. Some inexperienced **athletes** will quit rather than face the embarrassment of defeat.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (two present participial phrases)

\_\_\_\_\_ (past participial phrase)

\_\_\_\_\_ (infinitive phrase)

8. The **coffee table** was a welcome addition to our living room.

\_\_\_\_\_ (past participial phrase)

\_\_\_\_\_ (adjective clause)

## ADJECTIVES

## EXERCISE J: adjectives of all kinds

**Directions:** Fill in the blanks below with adjectives as indicated and modifying the noun or pronoun in bold print. Notice that you will be graded on both accuracy and creativity.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (article) \_\_\_\_\_ (simple past participle) computer needs to be repaired.
2. The supermarket \_\_\_\_\_ (prepositional phrase) stays open all night.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ (simple past participle) photograph \_\_\_\_\_ (prepositional phrase) was all the police needed to arrest him.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (present participial phrase), we noticed that the barn was on fire.
5. The referee, \_\_\_\_\_ (past participial phrase), \_\_\_\_\_ , blew the whistle on \_\_\_\_\_ (simple adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ (simple adjective) student \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective clause) will have to stay after school.
7. I promptly lost the \_\_\_\_\_ (simple past participle) jacket \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective clause)
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ (simple adjective) costume \_\_\_\_\_ (infinitive phrase)
9. The \_\_\_\_\_ (simple past participle) plumber finally fixed the faucet \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective clause)
10. You seem \_\_\_\_\_ (infinitive phrase) today.



## EXERCISE K: writing with adjectives

**Accuracy — Creativity**

Name:

**Directions:** On the lines below, write a scene for a novel. Pretend it's early in the story, and you are describing a place, perhaps along with some people. Because the focus is on the nouns, you will be using many adjectives to describe them. As you write, put the present and past participial phrases, and the adjective clauses, in parentheses. We have provided your first present participial phrase. Use the back of this page if necessary.

(Looking mysterious),

