

Verbal phrases: We have seen that a phrase is a group of words that acts like one word—like a wordclump. We have seen that phrases do not contain subject/predicate cores. We have seen that prepositional phrases act like modifiers (adjectives or adverbs), and we have seen that appositive phrases are interrupting definitions enclosed in commas. All that remains is the verbal phrases, and there are only three kinds, and each one can be defined in a single sentence.

Verbal phrases occur when we use a verb as something else; for example, we might use a verb as a noun. An example is *Thinking is fun*, in which the verb form *Thinking* is used as a noun—as a subject of the verb *is*. In that sentence there is no verb phrase, only the single verbal *Thinking*. In order to have a verbal phrase, then the verbal needs words that go with it: *Eating pizza is fun*. In that sentence the verbal phrase *Eating pizza* acts like a noun to serve as the subject of the sentence. *Eating pizza* behaves as though it were one word. The three kinds of verbal phrase are the gerund phrase, the participial phrase, and the infinitive phrase. Let us find out what gerunds, participles, and infinitives are.

Gerund: A gerund is an *-ing* verb form used as a noun. It can do anything that any other noun can do. It can be the subject, or direct object, or play any other noun role. Let us take the words *reading books* and use them as a gerund phrase:

As a subject: *Reading books is fun*.

As a direct object: *I love reading books*.

As an indirect object: *He makes reading books a pleasure*.

As the object of a preposition: *There is great benefit to reading books*.

In all of these sentences, the gerund phrase is just a kind of two-word noun, doing the things that nouns do. In the following sentence, *Writing the novel* is a gerund phrase, and we call *novel* the *object of the gerund*.

