

Participle: A participle is a verb form used as an adjective. Unlike gerunds, which always end in *-ing*, participles can end in any verb ending, such as *-ing*, *-ed*, and *-en*. Participial phrases can occur many places in sentences, depending upon which nouns or pronouns they modify. Let us look at a few participial phrases, noticing the way they act like adjectives to modify nouns or pronouns:

Dickens, **writing rapidly**, finished the chapter in a week.

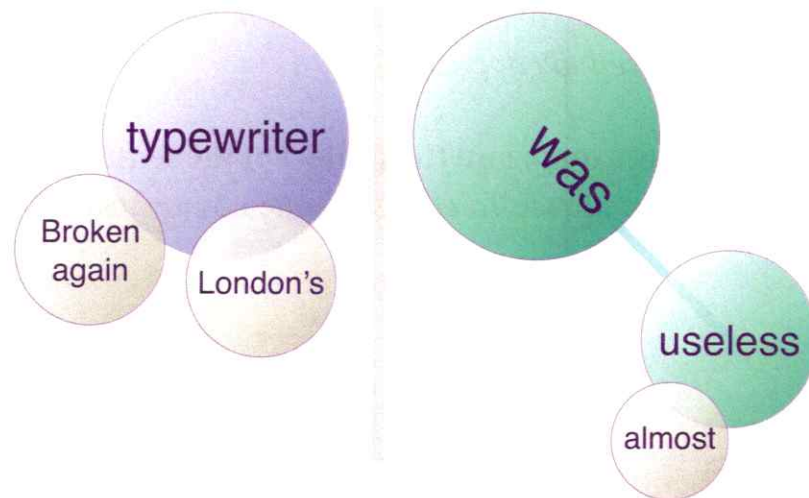
Writing rapidly, Dickens finished the chapter in a week.

Deeply cracked, the rock wall began to crumble.

We saw Austen, **badly disappointed**, leaving the building.

Fearing the worst, Jack London declined the invitation.

Broken again, London's typewriter was almost useless.



Introductory participial phrase: One important kind of participial phrase is the introductory participial phrase. It comes at the beginning of the sentence, modifies the subject, and is set off by a comma. There are four introductory participial phrases in the list above. It is crucial to understand these phrases because they add great energy to a sentence, but if they are not constructed according to the rules, they become disastrous misplaced modifiers:

Bad: Devouring the chipmunk, James saw the fox.

Good: Devouring the chipmunk, the fox stared at James.

In the phrase *Devouring the chipmunk*, the word *chipmunk* is the object of the participle.