

GERUNDS

What is a gerund?

A gerund is the -ing form of a verb used as a noun in sentence structure. Though it has the same form as the present participle, its uses differ.

GERUND: Walking the dog is Kim's job. (acts as a subject)

PARTICIPLE: Ken, walking the dog, got very tired. (modifies Ken)

A gerund may serve in any noun function:

SUBJECT:	<u>Looking</u> at tropical fish didn't satisfy the child.
OBJECT:	He taught <u>swimming</u> .
PREDICATE NOUN:	Seeing is <u>believing</u> .
MODIFIER:	I used a <u>cutting</u> board. (That is, a <u>board for cutting</u> , not a <u>board that cuts</u> .)

A gerund may be in present or perfect tenses, and in the active or passive voice:

my	
your	seeing
his	having seen
her	being seen
its	having been seen (passive)
our	
their	

What is the subject of a gerund?

The subject of a gerund is the noun or pronoun that occurs before the gerund, and the gerund can be used in 2 ways: Formal Possessive and General Object.

FORMAL: The neighbors complained about the dog's barking at night.

GENERAL: The neighbors complained about the dog barking at night.

FORMAL: Janet was excited about Jim's/his coming.

GENERAL: Janet was excited about Jim/him coming.

When is the possessive case preferred?

1. In formal usage.
2. When the emphasis is on the gerund:

Janet was excited about Jim's/his coming. About what? Jim's/his coming.

We were concerned with Taffy's/his constant scratching.

About what? About the scratching.

When is the object case preferred?

1. When the gerund is separated from its subject by other words:

People were surprised at him, a veteran speaker on many campuses, having no ready reply.

2. When the subject is emphatic:

We were proud of him winning the race. Who is winning the race? Him.
Have you heard of them losing their baby? Who is losing a baby? Them.

3. When the subject

--is abstract, or the name of an inanimate object:

Imagination getting out of control was the cause of the problem.

--has no possessive form:

They disapproved of so many being given.

Nobody could imagine this happening.

--is a plural noun:

I don't approve of children (possibly children's) stealing