

PHRASES

Definition: A phrase is a group of words, not containing a finite verb, doing the work of another part of speech.

Absolute phrases

- a. Simultaneous actions described by absolute phrases:
- An absolute phrase consists of a head - word (often a **noun**) plus at least one other word. Note that the head word in the absolute phrase denotes something which is a part of, or belong to the thing or person that is the subject of the finite verb of the sentence.

Ex:

1. The hunters **rested** for a moment in front of the shack.
Their breaths **were** white in the frosty air.
- > The hunters rested for a moment in front of the shack,
their breaths white in the frosty air.
- The noun (*breaths*) that begins this absolute phrase is followed by an **adjective** (*white*) and a **prepositional phrase** (*in the frosty air*).

2. She **read** the letter. While she read the letter, her hand **trembled**, and tear **rolled** down her face.

-> She read the letter, her hands trembling and tear rolling down her face.

- b. If the head - word and the subject denote the same thing or the same person, we have a participial phrase.
- Ex: She sat there. While she **sat** there, she **meditated**. Her eyes **stared** into space, and a pencil **was pressed** against her red lips.
 - > She sat there, meditating, her eyes staring into space, a pencil pressed against her red lips.

EXERCISE

1. My small boats were sailing along. Their sails were filled with the wind. Their flags were flying.
2. I stayed by the windows. I stared off into the space. My head buzzed with frightened, confused ideas.
3. He sat all by himself in the room. His back was turned to the window. He recollected old memories he shared with her.
4. I watched him. I did not know what to do. My head was leaping in my chest. Sweat was running down my face.
5. She looked up in surprise. Her eyes were wide open.

6. He lay unconscious on the floor. Blood was spurting out from his nose.
7. He looked up and stared at me. His eyes flashed anger.
8. He was sitting on the bench alone. He was grabbing tightly the bag that his mother had given him. There was a worried expression on his face.
9. Alice was sitting in the big chair by the window. She was sobbing. Her face was buried in her hands.
10. She was waiting. Her eyes were on her napkin.

OTHER KINDS OF PHRASES

Infinitive phrase: begin with an infinitive.

a. function as a noun

Example: To turn back now would be foolish.

Subject

* It would be foolish to turn back now. " It" here is the empty subject. The real one is " to turn back now"

My decision is to try to make friends with my new classmate.

Subjective complement

I decided to study harder after giving up smoking.

O of the verb

b. function as an adjective

Example: Mary has plenty of money to spend on the English books.

Modify to the noun " money"

c. function as an adverb:

Example: She went home to get her book.

Modify the verb "went" (Why did she go home?)

Gerund phrase: begin with a gerund

Example: _ Any whispering in class made her
angry.

Subject

_ My only interest is reading comic books.

Complement

_ I don't like being scolded in front of people.

O of the verb

_ He doesn't care about educating his children.

O of the prep.

_ My first part time job, delivering newspapers, gave

Appositive

me helpful experiences.

Prepositional phrase: begin with a preposition.

a. Function as an adjective

Example: _ He is a man *of action*

_ The boy *with short black hair* is an excellent student.

b. Function as an adverb

Example: _ I saw a terrible accident *through the window*.

Participle phrase: Begin with a present participle or a past participle

Example: _ A howling dog
 _ A screaming child
 _ A broken chair

a. present participle phrase

- When two actions by the same subject occur simultaneously, it is usually possible to express one of them by a present participle.
 - EX: _ He holds the rope with one hand and stretches out the other to the victim in the sea = Holding the rope with one hand, he stretches out the ...
- When one action is immediately followed by another, by the same subject, the first action can often be expressed by a present participle.
 - EX: _ He opened the drawer and took out the revolver = Opening the drawer he took out ...
- When the second action forms part of the first, or is the result of it, we can express the second action by a present participle.
 - EX: _ She went out, slamming the door.
 - _ I fell, striking my head against the door.

b. The past participle can replace a subject + passive verb

EX: _ She enters. She is accompanied by her mother = She enters, accompanied by her mother.

_ The bridge was weakened by successive storms, the bridge was no longer safe = Weakened by successive storms, the bridge was no longer safe.

_ As he was convinced that they were trying to poison him, he refused to eat anything = Convinced that they were trying to poison him, he refused to eat anything.

EXERCISE

Combine these sentences into one using phrases:

1. The old man wrote down my address. He did it with a stubby pencil. He did it on the bus.

2. Special bulletins interrupted regular programs. They did it during the day. The bulletins were about the astronaut's flights.

3. The sparrow tried to keep warm. It fluffed out its feathers.
4. I managed to get enough toothpaste on my brush. I squeezed the tube as hard as I could.
5. The runner set his feet into the starting blocks. He started straight ahead.
6. The produce clerk cheerfully weighed bags of fruit and vegetables. He chatted with each customer.
7. The diesel truck chugged up the hill. It spewed out black smoke.

8. Tim woke up with a start. He was troubled by a dream.
9. I dozed off. I was bored with the performance.
10. The old dollar bill felt like tissue paper. It was crinkled with age.
11. The students acted nervous and edgy. They were crowded into a tiny, windowless room.
12. I waited for someone to open the door. I was loaded down with heavy bags of groceries.

13. Tim bought a green-striped shirt. He was tired of this conservative wardrobe.
14. I fertilize the grass every spring. I want to make it greener.
15. We set bricks on the ends of the picnic table. We did this to anchor the flapping tablecloth.
16. The porch carpet felt like hundreds of little needles. The porch carpet was a green plastic imitation of grass.