

SKILL 4: BE CAREFUL OF PRESENT PARTICIPLES

A present participle is the *-ing* form of the verb (*talking, playing*). In structure questions on the TOEFL test, a present participle can cause confusion because it can be either a part of the verb or an adjective. It is part of the verb when it is preceded by some form of the verb *be*.

The man is talking to his friend.
VERB

In this sentence *talking* is part of the verb because it is accompanied by *is*.

A present participle is an adjective when it is not accompanied by some form of the verb *be*.

The man talking to his friend has a beard.
ADJECTIVE

In this sentence *talking* is an adjective and not part of the verb because it is not accompanied by some form of *be*. The verb in this sentence is *has*.

The following example shows how a present participle can be confused with the verb in structure questions on the TOEFL test.

Example from the Paper and Computer TOEFL® Tests

The child _____ playing in the yard is my son.

- (A) now
- (B) is
- (C) he
- (D) was

In this example, if you look at only the first words of the sentence, it appears that *child* is the subject and *playing* is part of the verb. If you think that *playing* is part of the verb, you might choose answer (B), *is*, or answer (D), *was*, to complete the verb. However, these two answers are incorrect because *playing* is not part of the verb. You should recognize that *playing* is a participial adjective rather than a verb because there is another verb in the sentence *is*. In this sentence there is a complete subject *child* and a complete verb *is*, so this sentence does not need another subject or verb. The best answer here is (A).

The following chart outlines what you should remember about present participles:

PRESENT PARTICIPLES

A *present participle* is the *-ing* form of the verb. The **present participle** can be (1) **part of the verb** or (2) an **adjective**. It is part of the *verb* when it is accompanied by some form of the verb *be*. It is an *adjective* when it is not accompanied by some form of the verb *be*.

1. The boy is **standing** in the corner.
2. The boy **standing** in the corner was naughty.

EXERCISE 4: Each of the following sentences contains one or more present participles. Underline the subjects once and the verbs twice. Circle the present participles and label them as adjectives or verbs. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- C 1. The companies (offering) the lowest prices will have the most customers.
ADJ.
- I 2. Those travelers are (completing) their trip on Delta should report to Gate Three.
VERB
- _____ 3. The artisans were demonstrating various handicrafts at booths throughout the fair.
- _____ 4. The fraternities are giving the wildest parties attract the most new pledges.
- _____ 5. The first team winning four games is awarded the championship.
- _____ 6. The speaker was trying to make his point was often interrupted vociferously.
- _____ 7. The fruits were rotting because of the moisture in the crates carrying them to market.
- _____ 8. Any students desiring official transcripts should complete the appropriate form.
- _____ 9. The advertisements were announcing the half-day sale received a lot of attention.
- _____ 10. The spices flavoring the meal were quite distinctive.

SKILL 5: BE CAREFUL OF PAST PARTICIPLES

Past participles can cause confusion in structure questions on the TOEFL test because a past participle can be either an adjective or a part of a verb. The past participle is the form of the verb that appears with *have* or *be*. It often ends in *-ed*, but there are also many irregular past participles in English. (See Appendix F for a list of irregular past participles.)

The family has purchased a television.
VERB

The poem was written by Paul.
VERB

In the first sentence the past participle *purchased* is part of the verb because it is accompanied by *has*. In the second sentence the past participle *written* is part of the verb because it is accompanied by *was*.

A past participle is an adjective when it is not accompanied by some form of *be* or *have*.

The television purchased yesterday was expensive.
ADJECTIVE

The poem written by Paul appeared in the magazine.
ADJECTIVE

In the first sentence *purchased* is an adjective rather than a verb because it is not accompanied by a form of *be* or *have* (and there is a verb, *was*, later in the sentence). In the second sentence *written* is an adjective rather than a verb because it is not accompanied by a form of *be* or *have* (and there is a verb, *appeared*, later in the sentence).