

55 Participle clauses

Elected in 1960, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka was the world's first woman prime minister.

1 Forms

There are several different participle forms in participle clauses:

	ACTIVE PARTICIPLE	PASSIVE PARTICIPLE
simple		(not) repaired
continuous	(not) repairing	(not) being repaired
perfect	(not) having repaired	(not) having been repaired

Using a password, I opened the email application. (Active: I used a password.)

Used with a password, the application offers complete security. (Passive: the application is used by someone.)

State verbs, e.g. *be, own, possess* (► Unit 25.1), can be used in participle clauses:

X Yolanda is rich and is owning six homes. ✓ *Yolanda is rich, owning six homes.*

2 Positioning and relationship with the subject

Participle clauses give information about a noun in the main clause, so they do not usually contain a subject. The subject of the main clause acts as the subject of the participle clause:

Moaning with pain, the victim was examined by a young doctor. (The victim was moaning.)



A participle clause at the beginning of a sentence cannot refer to the object of the main clause:

X Moaning with pain, a young doctor examined the victim.

(This would mean that the young doctor was moaning, not the victim.)

In formal written English the participle clause can have a subject which is related to the subject of the main clause, but which isn't exactly the same:

Horns locked, the two stags struggle for supremacy. (The horns belong to the stags.)

I crouched in the alleyway, my eyes straining in the darkness. (My eyes are part of me.)

For rules about subjects and objects in reduced relative clauses ► Unit 55.5

3 Clauses of time and sequence with *-ing* participle

We usually use these clauses when two actions happen at around the same time:

Turning the corner, we saw the hospital in front of us.

(= As we were turning the corner we saw the hospital in front of us.)

In written English an *-ing* participle clause often describes the setting or background:

Living in Los Angeles, Brad was one of those ever-optimistic movie wannabes.

Standing alone in the desert, the huge pyramid dominated the landscape.