

Handout 4_Present Participle

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1HB1,1HB2,1HB3 &1TP1

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Welcome to your focused TOEFL Lite session! On the TOEFL, structure questions frequently test your ability to recognize and correct errors involving verb forms. One of the most common traps involves present participles (verbs ending in -ing).

This guide breaks down everything you need to know to spot these patterns instantly and score points.

Part 1: The Core Concept

A present participle is formed by adding -ing to the base form of a verb (e.g., *writing*, *running*, *developing*). On the TOEFL, a present participle generally plays one of two key roles:

1. Part of a Continuous Tense: Accompanied by a helping verb (*is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *has*, *been*).
 - *Example:* The professor is delivering a lecture.
2. An Adjective (Participial Phrase): Modifying a noun without a helping verb. This is where TOEFL test-makers love to trick you!
 - *Example:* The student asking a question is well-prepared.

(*Meaning: The student who is asking...*)

Part 2: High-Yield TOEFL Patterns

To master present participles for TOEFL Lite, you must recognize these three critical structures:

Pattern A: Reduced Relative Clauses (Active Voice)

When a relative clause in the active voice starts with *who*, *which*, or *that* + a verb, the TOEFL often shortens it by dropping the relative pronoun and auxiliary verb, leaving only the present participle.

- Full Clause: The software that analyzes data quickly is very expensive.
- Reduced (TOEFL Style): The software analyzing data quickly is very expensive.
- The TOEFL Trap: Test-makers might remove -ing and write "The software *analyze* data quickly..." or confuse it with a past participle (*analyzed*).

Always remember: Active meaning = -ing.

Pattern B: Present Participles as Adjectives

Present participles can function as descriptive adjectives placed either before or after a noun.

- Before the noun: The growing economy requires more resources.
- After the noun (as a phrase): Companies investing in renewable energy will receive tax breaks.

Pattern C: Participial Phrases at the Beginning of a Sentence

When a participial phrase starts a sentence, it must modify the subject immediately following the comma.

- Correct: Waiting for the exam results, Maria felt anxious. (*Maria is the one waiting*)
- Incorrect (The Dangling Modifier Trap): Waiting for the exam results, the clock seemed to move very slowly. (*The clock is not waiting!*)

Part 3: Quick Strategy Guide for TOEFL

- Active vs. Passive Check: If the noun performs the action, use a present participle (-ing). If the noun receives the action, use a past participle (-ed).
 - *Active*: The team working on the project... (The team works)
 - *Passive*: The project completed yesterday... (The project is completed)
- Watch out for Incomplete Sentences: A present participle *without* a helping verb cannot act as the main verb of a sentence.
 - *Incorrect*: The committee discussing the new budget policy. (*Missing main verb*)
 - *Correct*: The committee is discussing the new budget policy. OR The committee discussing the new budget policy approved it yesterday.