

Gerund vs Participle in French: What's the Difference?

Worksheet

The gerund (en + -ant verb form) expresses an action simultaneous with or preceding the main verb, while the present participle (bare -ant form) functions as an adjective or describes accompanying circumstances without 'en'.

Questions

1. 'En écrivant la lettre' — what is 'en écrivant'?
A) present participle
B) gerund
C) adjective
D) past participle
2. 'Un enfant adorable' — what is 'adorable'?
A) gerund
B) adjective from participle
C) infinitive
D) adverb
3. 'Voyant le film, ils ont pleuré.' — function of 'voyant'?
A) showing manner
B) describing an action accompanying the main verb
C) indicating purpose
D) showing time
4. Which requires 'en'?
A) present participle
B) gerund
C) both equally
D) neither
5. Il a réussi en travaillant dur. (He succeeded by working hard.)
6. Voyant le danger, il a crié. (Seeing the danger, he shouted.)
7. Elle part en chantant. (She leaves singing.)
8. Define: What is a gerund in French?
9. Define: What is a present participle?
10. Define: Does the participle use 'en'?

Answer Key

1. B) gerund — 'en écrivant' is a gerund: 'en' + present participle.
2. B) adjective from participle — 'Adorable' is an adjective derived from a participle.
3. B) describing an action accompanying the main verb — 'Voyant' is a participle describing what they were doing when they cried.
4. B) gerund — Only gerunds use 'en'; participles don't.
5. 'en travaillant' is a gerund showing the manner of success. Structure: en + present participle (en travaillant).
6. 'Voyant' is a present participle describing an accompanying action. No 'en'; functions like 'seeing, he...' (simultaneous action).
7. 'en chantant' gerund shows simultaneous action (while leaving, she sings). Compare: 'Elle part, chantante' — she leaves, singing (participle as adjective).
8. A verb form with 'en' that expresses manner, time, or condition (en + -ant form).
9. A verb form ending in -ant that functions as an adjective or describes accompanying actions.
10. No — 'en' is only used with gerunds (gérondif).

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