

English Grammar - Participle Clauses

Source: <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/grammar/intermediate-to-upper-intermediate/participle-clauses>

Participle clauses are a way to say information in a more economical way. They are mainly used in written texts, particularly in literature, academia and journalism. Here are some examples (the participle clauses are underlined):

- Taken care of, these boots will last for many years.
- Not wanting to hurt his feelings, I avoided the question.
- Having lived through difficult times together, they were very close friends.
- Having finished lunch, I sat in the garden with a coffee.
- Running to get to work, he slipped on some ice and fell over.
- Embarrassed by the attention, she thanked everyone for the cake and presents.

We can use participle clauses when the participle and the verb in the main clause have the same subject. For example:

Waiting for Sue, John made some tea.

(~~While John was~~ waiting for Sue, **John** made some tea.)

Note that in this example, by using a participle clause, we economize three words.

Participle clauses can be formed in three ways:

- 1) With a **present participle**: *going, reading, seeing, eating*
- 2) With a **past participle**: *gone, read, seen, eaten*
- 3) With a **perfect participle**: *having gone, having read, having seen, having eaten*

1) Present participle clauses.

- a) The result of an action: The bomb exploded, destroying the building.
- b) The reason for an action: Knowing that she loves books, Richard bought her a novel.
- c) For simultaneous actions: Standing in the queue, I realized that I didn't have any money.
- d) Extra information: Starting next year, the new policy will ban cars in the center.

It is also common for present participles to follow conjunctions and prepositions such as *before*, *instead of*, *on*, *while* and *despite*. Here are some examples:

- **Before** cooking, you should wash your hands.
- **Instead of** complaining about it, they should try to do something to fix it.
- **On** arriving at the hotel, he took a shower.
- **While** packing her bags, she thought about her late husband.
- **Despite** reading the instructions twice, I still couldn't understand how to use the device.

2) Past participle clauses

- a) Similar meaning to "if": Driven slowly, your car will use less gasoline.
(*If you drive slowly, ...*)
- b) The reason for an action: Worried by the news, she called the hospital.
- c) Extra information: Filled with pride, he walked onto the stage.

3) Perfect participle clauses

The context of perfect participle clauses is to show that an action/event was finished before another action/event. The clauses can be active or passive. For example:

- Having dressed, he went downstairs. (*active*)
- Having finished their training, they will work as qualified doctors. (*active*)
- Having been fired, she started looking for a new job. (*passive*)

(See “Perfect participle clauses” (next page) for more details and exercises)

Exercise 1. Complete the participle clauses in the following sentences, using the given verbs. Also, state the context of each participle clause in relation to the main clause.

Possible contexts: a) The result of an action.
b) The reason for an action.
c) Simultaneous actions.
d) Extra information.
e) Similar meaning to “if”.
f) One action/event finished before another action/event.

1. _____ by the changing information, they thought that the plane was canceled. (*confuse*)
Context: _____
2. _____ at a low temperature, these jeans will keep their original color for a long time. (*wash*)
Context: _____
3. _____ in India for two years in the 1980s, Martin could speak some Hindi. (*live*)
Context: _____
4. _____ by a local architect, the house combines local materials with original design. (*build*)
Context: _____
5. _____ for the final interview, the candidates were asked to give a presentation. (*selected*)
Context: _____
6. _____ the newspaper, he saw the news about his hometown. (*read*)
Context: _____
7. _____ in hospital for several weeks, she was delighted to be home. (*be*)
Context: _____
8. The building collapsed, _____ two people. (*injure*)
Context: _____
9. _____ under normal clothes, a thermal layer keeps you warm in low temperatures. (*wear*)
Context: _____
10. _____ by the sun, she didn't see the boy crossing the road. (*dazzle*)
Context: _____

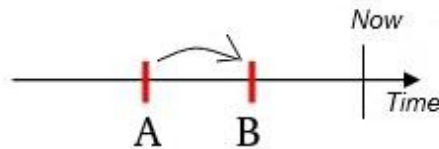
Answers (in white):

Perfect Participle Clauses (“having” + past participle)

We use this structure to talk about a **past event** or **experience** which influenced another **past event** or a **current experience**. There are therefore two possible grammatical structures for the main clause:

1) Two past events.

Both clauses refer to past events. We use the Past Simple in the main clause.



Example: **Having passed** her driving test, Maria decided to buy a car.

Notes: a) We use a comma after the participle clause.

b) The subject is only used in the second clause.

Alternative structures use the Past Perfect tense:

Maria decided to buy a car **because** she had passed her driving test.

Since she had passed her driving test, Maria decided to buy a car.

An example with “not”:

Having not eaten for two days, the man was extremely hungry.

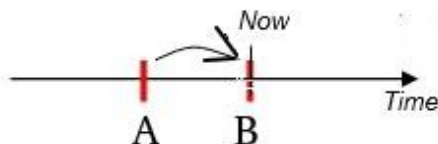
An example in the passive voice:

Having been fixed, the refrigerator was working again.

Having been fixed, it was working again. (*assuming that the context is known*)

2) One past event.

The main clause refers to present experience, so we use the Present Simple. It represents the consequence of a previous action or event.



Example: **Having lived** in Saudi Arabia for three years, John can speak Arabic well.

Alternative structures use the Past Simple or Present Perfect tense:

John can speak Arabic well **because** he (has) lived in Saudi Arabia for three years.

Since he (has) lived in Saudi Arabia for three years, John can speak Arabic well.

Exercise 2. Transform the following sentences using a perfect participle clause:

1. John wanted to travel abroad because he had learned English.

2. Since Eric had saved some money, he decided to buy a new TV.

3. Kevin can understand French because he lived in France when he was young.

4. Since Clive has known Mary for over 20 years, he can understand how she feels.

Exercise 3. Combine each pair of sentences into one, firstly using a perfect participle clause, and secondly with an alternative structure.

Example: Fred *lived in Spain for a long time*. He *can speak Spanish*.

--> a) **Having lived** in Spain for a long time, Fred can speak Spanish.

--> b) Fred can speak Spanish **because he lived** in Spain for a long time.

1. She learned English. She looked for a job in the USA.

a) _____

b) _____

2. They have visited the island many times. They know it well.

a) _____

b) _____

3. I was a teacher for ten years. I know how hard the job is.

a) _____

b) _____

The Beatles' song "A Day in the Life" contains an example of a perfect participle clause:

I saw a film today, oh boy. The English Army had just won the war.

A crowd of people turned away, but I just had to look having read the book.

The subject of a sentence

A perfect participle clause can also be used as the subject of a sentence.

Examples:

1) Peter has learned English. He had an advantage over his colleagues.

--> **Having learned English** gave Peter an advantage over his colleagues.

(notice the use of the "connecting verb" – 'gave')

2) Mary had studied law. She understood the complexity of the situation.

--> **Having studied law** allowed Mary to understand the complexity of the situation.

(notice the use of the "connecting verb" – 'allowed')

Exercise 4. Combine each pair of sentences into one, using a perfect participle clause as the subject of each sentence. Use the given connecting verbs.

1. Bob had eaten so much food. He felt unwell. (*made*)

2. Jane hadn't slept well for a week. She was extremely tired. (*caused*)

3. They had traveled 400km. They needed some gasoline. (*meant that*)
