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Materials and Resources
Other lessons in the LTF guides which deal with infinitive phrases are
- Sentence Structure Basics
- Sentence Variations
- The Poetry of Phrases

Lesson Introduction
Gerund phrases are introduced in the eighth grade, along with participial phrases. This lesson uses both literary and rhetorical texts that include many gerund phrases for students to work with as well as activities that require students to write sentences that include gerund phrases.

Definitions and Examples
You may want to review infinitives with students before completing this lesson.

Student Activities
The student activities are designed to help students begin to identify gerunds/gerund phrases and how they are used in sentence construction. Exercises A, B, and D all use quotations from notable people. It is important that students realize that these elements we teach are used by real people in real situations. Exercise F asks students to create their own sentences using gerunds/gerund phrases. You might want to ask students to use a specific piece of text as the topic for their sentences. For example: if students were reading *The Giver*, they might write sentences about the characters, plot, setting, or theme of that novel using gerunds.
A gerund is a verb ending in –ing, that functions as a noun rather than a verb. A gerund phrase consists of the gerund plus any other modifying words.

A. Identifying Gerunds

Description: A gerund is a verb form ending in ing that is used as a noun.

Example: Swimming is fun.

Verb form: swim
-ing form: swimming
used as a noun: Swimming is fun.

Remember that nouns can be substituted with pronouns. Therefore, we can substitute the gerund swimming with the pronoun it, and we will still have a good sentence.

Example: Swimming is fun. It is fun.

How to find it: Look for a word that looks like a verb ending in –ing. Try to replace the word with it. If the replacement leaves you with a good sentence, you have found a gerund.

Example: Skiing can be dangerous. It can be dangerous.

Exercise A: Underline the gerunds in the following sentences, which are quotes from notable people. There may be more than one gerund in a sentence.

Example: Singing is fun.

1. Fighting is like champagne. It goes to the heads of cowards as quickly as of heroes. Any fool can be brave on a battlefield when it’s be brave or else be killed.—Margaret Mitchell, American author

2. Crying is the refuge of plain women but the ruin of pretty ones.—Oscar Wilde, British playwright

3. Life is like dancing. If we have a big floor, many people will dance. Some will get angry when the rhythm changes. But life is changing all the time.—Don Miguel Ruiz, author and teacher

4. I don’t like driving very much. That makes me very unhappy, because I scream a lot in the car, but other than that, life is actually pretty good.—Whoopi Goldberg, actress and comedian

5. What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.—T.S. Eliot, British author

6. Flying is hours and hours of boredom sprinkled with a few seconds of sheer terror. —Gregory “Pappy” Boyington, American WWII fighter pilot
7. The purpose of learning is growth, and our minds, unlike our bodies, can continue growing as we continue to live.—*Mortimer J. Adler, American philosopher and educator*

8. Reading is a basic tool in the living of a good life.—*Mortimer J. Adler, American philosopher and educator*

9. Winning isn’t everything. Wanting to is.—*Catfish Hunter, MLB pitcher*

10. Healing takes courage, and we all have courage, even if we have to dig a little to find it.—*Tori Amos, singer/songwriter*

B. Identifying Gerund Phrases
Description: A gerund phrase consists of a gerund and any modifiers or complements it may have.

   Example:  *Walking in the rain* is sometimes fun.

How to find it:  Look for the entire group of words that can be substituted by the word *it*. Remember that nouns can be substituted with pronouns and that a gerund is a noun. Therefore it can be substituted with *it*, though the sentence will be very vague.

   Example:  *Swinging in the trees* can be dangerous.  *It* can be dangerous.

**Exercise B:** Underline the gerunds and gerund phrases in the following sentences, which are quotes from notable people. There may be more than one in a sentence.

1. You cannot love a thing without wanting to fight for it.—*G. K. Chesterton, British author*

2. Somebody just back of you while you are fishing is as bad as someone looking over your shoulder while you write a letter to your girl.—*Ernest Hemingway, American author*

3. Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after.  
   —*Henry David Thoreau, American author*

4. I hope everyone that is reading this is having a really good day. And if you are not, just know that in every new minute that passes you have an opportunity to change that.  
   —*Gillian Anderson, actress*

5. Learning by experience often is painful—and the more it hurts, the more you learn.  
   —*Ralph Banks, author*

6. Learning how to learn is life’s most important skill.—*Tony Buzan, American author*

7. Seeing much, suffering much, and studying much, are the three pillars of learning.  
   —*Benjamin Disraeli, former British Prime Minister*
8. So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it.—Jiddu Krishnamurti, Indian writer, speaker, and philosopher

9. By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.—Benjamin Franklin, American scientist, inventor, statesman, printer, and philosopher.

10. Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing. —Harper Lee, American author

11. You’ve really got to start hitting the books because it’s no joke out here.—Spike Lee, American filmmaker

12. Reading furnishes the mind only with material for knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours.—John Locke, English philosopher and author

13. Winning is only half of it. Having fun is the other half.—Bum Phillips, former NFL coach

C. Using possessive nouns and pronouns with gerunds

Rule: One important thing you must know is that when you put a noun or pronoun in front of a gerund, you must use the possessive form of the noun or pronoun.

Example: His singing disturbed me. It disturbed me. What did? His singing, not him. We could never say, “Him singing disturbed me.” The thing that disturbed me was just that—a thing, —and things can be owned or possessed.

Sam’s singing disturbed me
I was disturbed by his singing.
I was disturbed by Sam’s singing.

Exercise C: Underline the correct form of the noun or pronoun to precede the gerund.

1. (His, Him) talking so loud is a distraction.
2. I was upset by (Sam, Sam’s) failing the test.
3. We really enjoyed (Mary, Mary’s) singing last night.
4. When (them, their) watching television interferes with school work, I get annoyed.
5. What do you think about (me, my) taking that job?
6. I was amazed by (you, your) running so quickly.
7. We were all surprised by (him, his) speaking so boldly.
8. No one understood (him, his) making such an issue of a simple issue.
9. I’m not concerned with your liking or disliking me... All I ask is that you respect me as a human being.—Jackie Robinson, first black MBL baseball player of the modern era
D. Beginning sentences with gerund phrases

**Exercise D:** Rewrite each of the following sentences so that each sentence begins with a gerund phrase. Change the infinitives in the sentence into gerunds. You may add or delete words to make the sentence flow smoothly.

Example: It is better to be defeated on principle than to win on lies.—Arthur Caldwell, Australian politician

**Being defeated on principle** is better than **winning on lies**.

1. To know how to grow old is the master work of wisdom, and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living.—Henri Frederic Amiel, Swiss philosopher and poet

2. It takes a lot of courage to show your dreams to someone else.—Erma Bombeck, American humorist

3. To exercise good character daily is to be morally fit for life.—Karen Hartz, author

4. I think it’s possible to overcome anything, if you’re willing to work at it.—Sheryl Swoopes, three-time WNBA MVP

5. I think it’s the mark of a great player to be confident in tough situations.—John McEnroe, ATP tennis champion
6. You have to train your mind like you train your body.—Bruce Jenner, Olympic gold-medalist in track and field

7. It is always in season for old men to learn.—Aeschylus, Ancient Greek playwright

8. The first duty of love is to listen.—Paul Tillich, German-American theologian

9. To feel most beautifully alive means to be reading something beautiful.—Gaston Bachelard, French philosopher

Choose one of the sentences above that you believe is a more effective sentence using gerunds and explain why. Sentence #

Choose one of the sentences above that you believe is a less effective sentence using gerunds and explain why. Sentence #
E. Combining sentences with gerund phrases

Exercise E: Combine the following short sentences into one longer sentence that contains a gerund or a gerund phrase. Try to begin the sentences you create with the gerund or the gerund phrase.

Example: I love to play golf. It is my hobby.

*Playing golf* is my hobby.

1. I like to paint. It is fun.

2. I like to play baseball. It is my favorite pastime.

3. I wanted the attention. I got the attention. I rang the bell.

4. Many students have a goal. It is to graduate with honors.

5. I want to backpack across Europe. It can be very educational.

6. Some things are important in life. It is good to learn about different cultures.

7. We should prepare for the SAT. It is a worthwhile endeavor.

8. He promises to reduce taxes. It is a promise of every politician.

9. Don’t come to class late. It is a disruption.

10. If you press the red button, something will happen. It will cause the alarm to sound.
F. Creating sentences with gerund phrases

**Exercise F:** Create 10 sentences which contain gerund phrases placed in various parts of the sentence. Underline the gerund or gerund phrase in each sentence.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

9. 

10. 