

Un-Vilifying Verbals: Infinitives, Participles & Gerunds

**Sample Sentences
for a
Much Maligned
Grammatical Group**

by
Betsy A. Lockhart

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First Edition

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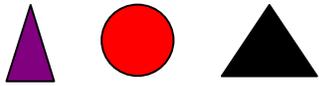
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Excerpts from the Preface (for the Sneek-a-Peek)

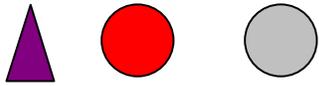
Did you read the title of this material set and say, “Verbals? What are they?” If so, you are not alone. Verbals are an essential part of our spoken and written language! Yet they are feared and vilified because of the way that most of us were first exposed to them, usually in middle or high school.

You may be more familiar with the terms *infinitive*, *participle (past and present)*, and *gerund*. Did reading those terms strike fear and terror into your heart? If so, recognize the gift that you can give your students by presenting these parts of speech in a straightforward, easily understood manner! Properly presented, they are great fun because of their puzzle-like nature! We feel extraordinarily intelligent when we refuse to be tricked by parts of speech that are wearing disguises!

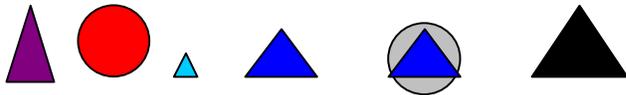
Quite simply, words are verbals if they LOOK like a verb but ACT like something else. There are 3 types of verbals: infinitives, participles, and gerunds. Here is a brief summary:



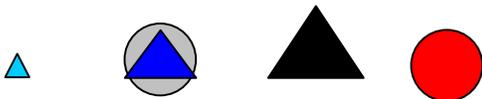
I like books. *There are no verbals in this sentence.*



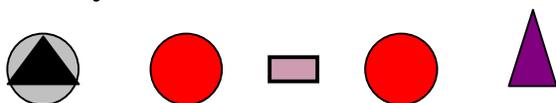
I like to polish. *In this identically constructed sentence (subject-predicate-direct object), "to polish" is an **infinitive**. It LOOKS like a verb but ACTS like something else. Here, it ACTS like a noun, like the word "book" in the first sentence. Infinitives always take the form of "to+verb". Infinitives' symbol is a circle the size of a verb, but is silver in color - less "active" than the red verb, yet still valuable.*



I use a special polishing cloth. *"polishing" is a **participle**. It LOOKS like a verb but ACTS like an adjective. Here, it describes the cloth.*



The polished silver gleams. *"polished" is also a **participle**. It LOOKS like a verb but ACTS like an adjective. Here, it describes the silver. Participles can be present participles, taking the "-ing" form, or past participles, taking the "-ed" form. "Polishing" is a **present participle**. "Polished" is a **past participle**. Both present and past participles use the same symbol: the silver circle used for infinitives with a blue adjective triangle on top, reminding us that participles act like adjectives.*



Polishing calms and centers me. *"polishing" is a **gerund**. It LOOKS like a verb but ACTS like a noun. Here, it is the subject of the sentence. Gerunds always take the "-ing" form. Gerunds' symbol is the silver circle used for infinitives with a black triangle on top, reminding us that gerunds act like nouns.*

More complete explanation and more examples, as well as complete lessons on infinitives, participles, and gerunds can be found in the album *Not Your Grandma's Grammar*.

Why are verbals so important?

Verbals are everywhere in our spoken and written language, so they are really important to teach to our children. Without an understanding of verbals (and a way to represent them), children are confounded by sentences that use them! If you allow children to write their own sentences, you have no doubt encountered this difficulty, because we use verbals so commonly in our language! Take, for example, the simple sentence, “I want to go to the store.” Children will properly identify *want* as the verb, *I* as a pronoun, and *to the store* as a prepositional phrase.



I want to go to the store.

Now what? If the child identifies *to* as a preposition and *go* as a verb, she has an illegal pattern! A preposition can only be followed by members of the noun family! Similarly, a child trying to symbolize any of the above sentences will be tempted by the “verbishness” of words like *to polish*, *polishing*, and *polished* (or *to go*, *going*, and *gone*) into improbable or illegal patterns!

And yet, few Montessori elementary programs fully explore all that verbals have to offer. I believe it is in part because there is no ready pool of sentences with controls of error, so that teachers who are still feeling whatever trauma was associated with their own learning about infinitives, participles and gerunds find other things that will challenge their students, avoiding verbals altogether. This will inevitably result in confusion for the child, rocking his confidence in his grammar skills.

This collection of sentences is intended to remedy that deficit, providing cross-curricular practice sentences in three stages:

- 1) Isolated verbals with content from Botany, Atomic Theory, and Ancient Greece
 - Infinitives
 - Participles
 - Gerunds
- 2) Mixed verbals with familiar sentences from the previous activity, sorted according to curricular area (Botany, Atomic Theory, and Ancient Greece)
- 3) New sentences with mixed verbals (and one sentence with no verbals!) with context from the 5 Great Lessons.

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Vital Bit

The most important thing is to approach all of this as an entertaining puzzle to be solved, and/or as an opportunity for children to take a position and defend it, rather than as something for which it is imperative that the one-true-correct-solution must be attained! The more sophisticated the sentences, the less the grammar is a matter of absolute fact and the more opinion enters in! Be sure that everyone is having fun with this goofy English language or ours – especially you!

Please know that if you wish to discuss the solutions that I have provided on the Controls of Error, I would be delighted to hear from you, and even more delighted if you can convince me that an alternate interpretation is as valid or more valid than my own! Here is how to reach me:

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Infinitives

Photosynthesis is the process used to convert light energy into chemical energy to fuel the organism.

Plants and some species of algae and bacteria use this to make food from carbon dioxide and sunlight.

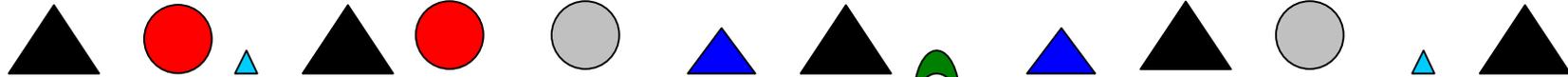
To make a compound, combine two or more molecules; water is a compound.

Some elements, like oxygen, tend to combine with other elements easily.

Ideas from ancient *Greeks* continue to thrive and to develop in many modern cultures.

The *Greek* word, *polis*, is the root used (to mean) *city* in words like metropolis and police.

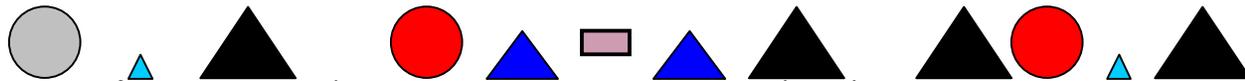
Infinitives – Control of Error



Photosynthesis is the process used {to convert} light energy into chemical energy {to fuel} an organism.



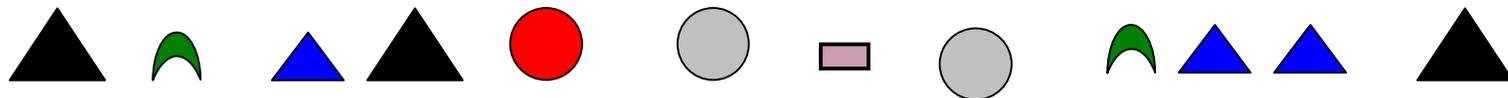
Plants and some species of algae and bacteria use this {to make} food from (carbon dioxide) and sunlight.



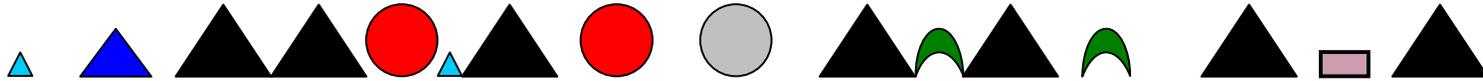
{To make} a compound, combine two or more molecules; water is a compound.



Some elements, like oxygen, tend {to combine} with other elements easily.



Ideas from ancient Greeks continue {to thrive} and {to develop} in many modern cultures.



The Greek word, *polis*, is the root used {to mean} city in words like metropolis and police.