

## Participle clauses with adverbial meaning 2

Reminder → J6-J10

**A** We can use prepositions such as **after**, **before**, **besides**, **by**, **in**, **on**, **since**, **through**, **while**, **with**, and **without** in a present participle (-ing) clause with an adverbial meaning (see also Unit 58):

- While understanding** her problem, I don't know how I can help. (= Although I understand ...)
- After spending** so much money on the car, I can't afford a holiday.
- Before being changed** last year, the speed limit was 70 kph. (passive form)

An alternative is a clause with a verb that can change according to tense and subject. Compare:

- Since moving** to London, we haven't had time to go to the theatre. *and*
- Since we moved** to London, we haven't had time to go to the theatre. (less formal)

**B** **by, in, on + -ing**

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>By working</b> hard, she passed her maths exam.	= the <b>-ing clause</b> indicates 'the method or means used'
<input type="checkbox"/> They only survived <b>by eating</b> roots and berries in the forest.	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>On returning</b> from Beijing, he wrote to the Chinese embassy.	= the <b>-ing clause</b> indicates 'when'
<input type="checkbox"/> Josh was the first person I saw <b>on leaving</b> hospital.	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>In criticising</b> the painting, I knew I would offend her.	= the <b>-ing clause</b> indicates 'cause'
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>In choosing</b> Marco, the People's Party has moved to the left.	

We can often use **by + -ing** or **in + -ing** with a similar meaning, although **by + -ing** is preferred in informal contexts:

- In / By writing** about Spanish culture, I came to understand the country better. ('In writing ...' = the consequence of writing was to understand ...; 'By writing ...' = the method I used to understand the country better was to write...)

But compare:

- By telephoning** every hour, she managed to speak to the doctor. (*not* In telephoning ...; the method is the focus here, not the consequence)

**C** **with -ing; without -ing**

**With + -ing** often introduces a reason for something in the main clause. This use is fairly informal.

Note that a subject has to come between **with** and **-ing**:

- With Louise living** in Spain, we don't see her often. (= Because Louise lives in Spain ...)

**With** and **what with** can also be used with a noun phrase to introduce a reason:

- With my bad back** I won't be able to lift a heavy suitcase.
- What with the traffic and the heavy rain**, it's no wonder you were late.

We can use **without + -ing** to say that a second action doesn't happen:

- I went to work **without eating** breakfast.
- They left **without paying**.

Often, however, it has a similar meaning to 'although ... not' or 'unless':

- Without meaning** to, I seem to have offended her. (= Although I didn't mean to ...)
- Without using** the app, I can't judge how good it is. (= Unless I use the app ...)

**D** Adverbial meanings can also be added by a clause beginning with a conjunction or adjective but with no verb. This kind of clause has the same meaning as a clause beginning with a **conjunction + subject + be** and is used in fairly formal English (more informal alternatives are given in brackets):

- While in Poland**, they will play two concerts in Warsaw. (*or While* they are in Poland ...)
- Although just two feet apart**, they didn't speak. (*or Although* they were just ...)
- I try to use public transport **whenever possible**. (*or ... whenever* it is possible.)
- Unhappy with the decision**, Johnson swore at the referee. (*or Because* he was unhappy ...)

# Exercises

59.1 Complete these sentences using a preposition from (i) and the **-ing** form or **being + past participle** form of a verb from (ii). You may use the words from (i) more than once. **A**

(i)

after before since  
through while

(ii)

~~come~~ interview leave overthrow  
sell take welcome work

- 1 *Since coming* out of hospital, I have been to the gym every day.
- 2 ..... on TV last night, the minister mentioned that she would be retiring soon.
- 3 ..... the back off the computer, make sure it is unplugged.
- 4 ..... the government's new policy, I think it should have been introduced months ago.
- 5 ..... in a military takeover, the king has been under house arrest.
- 6 ..... with young children for the last 40 years, she has come to understand their behaviour better than most.
- 7 ..... to the public, most milk is pasteurised.
- 8 ..... Oxford University in 1983, Painter spent three years teaching at a local school.

59.2 Join the sentences, beginning them with **by + -ing**, **on + -ing**, or **in + -ing**. **B**

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 She returned home.           | a She soon began to lose weight.                            |
| 2 She gave up sugar.           | b She saved over a hundred pounds a month.                  |
| 3 She turned down the job.     | c She knew that she might offend him.                       |
| 4 She moved to a smaller flat. | d <del>She found Dave waiting outside her front door.</del> |
| 5 She entered the classroom.   | e She gave up the possibility of a huge salary.             |
| 6 She criticised her father.   | f She was surprised when all the children stood up.         |

1 + d *On returning home, she found Dave waiting outside her front door.*

59.3 Rewrite these sentences beginning **With ... -ing** or **Without ... -ing**. **C**

- 1 We couldn't go on holiday because Maryam had flu.  
.....
- 2 I won't be able to advise you unless I have more information.  
.....
- 3 He had solved the problem, although he didn't realise it.  
.....
- 4 I couldn't wait for Andrei any longer as time was running out before the train left. .  
.....

59.4 Revise this biography by replacing six more full clauses with reduced clauses (**as** in the examples in section D opposite), and making any other necessary changes. **D**

*Although from a poor background*  
~~Although she was from a poor background~~, Paula Regis gained a place at Southam University. She was always fascinated by the stars and she took a first degree in astrophysics. Once she was at university she also became interested in student politics and, because she was popular with her fellow students, was elected University President in her second year. This didn't distract her from her studies, however, and while she was in the final year of her degree, she won the International Young Scientist of the Year award for her work on star classification. When she was asked what was the secret of her success she said, 'Just hard work and a little luck.' She is determined to continue her research and she has recently begun work on her PhD.