

MORPHOLOGICAL FORMS OF FINITE & NON-FINITE AND INFINITIVE VERBS

Consider the following examples;

- e.g. (i) **Bill works in a bank.**
(ii) **Bill worked in a bank.**

For the purposes of abbreviation we refer to the verb form in (i) as the '-s' form, and the form in (ii) as the '-d' form. You will of course recognize these as the present and past simple tenses. When these tenses are formed using only the main verb, as in these examples, the finite element is expressed in the inflected form which the main verb takes. Thus the '-s' and '-d' inflections are the morphological realizations of the finite element.

There is one important difference between the present and past simple forms. In the present tense, the principle of number concordance applies, so that the '-s' form only occurs with subjects which are third person singular. For all the other types of subject (first and second person singular and all plurals), the uninflected base form of the verb is used.

We can therefore summarize the fact that the finite verb forms for the present and past simple tenses as follows, which thus shows two finite forms for the present, and one for the past:-

TENSE	VERB FORM
present	'-s', Or 'base'
past	'-d' i.e. {-d, -t, -id}

NONFINITE VERB FORMS (VERBALS)

In English, we call nonfinite verb forms *verbals*. The types of verbals are *infinitives*, *participles* and *gerunds*.

The difference between a *finite verb* and a *verbal (nonfinite verb form)* is that a *finite verb* is completely *inflected*. In English, verbs are inflected according to five aspects:

Person: first, second, or third

Number: singular or plural

Tense: past, present, future, or any of the other tenses

Mood: indicative, imperative, or subjunctive

Voice: active or passive

The reason some verbs are called *finite* is that the above mentioned inflections having occurred with the verb seem to limit the verb for the selection of their subjects. However, a *nonfinite verb form* is not limited by inflection, in fact, it does not carry the inflectional markers, in the same way that a blank sheet of paper has all sorts of possibilities that a paper with writing or drawing on it no longer has.

A *clause* can only have as its *predicate* a *finite verb*, or if it has a *verb phrase* for a *predicate*, the *auxiliary (helping) verb* must be *finite*.

An *infinitive* is the uninflected, or plain, form of the verb. In English we usually use the particle "to" when talking or writing about infinitives: *to run, to jump, to see, to think, to be*.

A *participle* acts as an *adjective* (*running shoes; broken vase; lost child; unread book*), or as the *main verb* in a *verb phrase* (the last verb in the series of words that make up a verb phrase: *to have run; am walking; had bought; would be thinking*). A *participle* can be either *present tense* or *past tense*, but will not have any of the other four inflections found in finite verbs.

A *gerund* is the *ing* form of a verb used as a *noun*. The *gerund* form of a verb looks exactly like the *present participle*, but they function differently in a sentence. The *gerund* will fill a *noun slot* (*subject, direct object, object of preposition, etc.*), but the *participle* will be either an *adjective* or part of a *verb phrase*:

~*Running* is good exercise. (*gerund*)

~Are those new *running* shoes? (*participle*)

~He *is running* his last race today. (*participle*)

~Don't even think about *buying* that dress! (*gerund*)

~This is the new *buying* guide for used cars. (*participle*)

~I won't *be buying* a new car until I can save up a decent down payment. (*participle*)