Worksheet 1: Participle, Adjective or Gerund?

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C1 (CEFR)

Reference: Drawing the Boundaries

The -ing and -ed forms sit at the boundary of three categories. Distributional tests, not intuition, decide the classification.

Category	Diagnostic tests	Example
True participle *(verbal)*	Takes an object or adverb; part of a clause; retains verbal force; cannot be graded with *very*	*the man **driving the lorry*** — takes object
Participial adjective	Gradable with *very / extremely*; can follow *seem / look / become*; may have a comparative; often has drifted in meaning	*a **very interesting** idea; it seems **broken***
Gerund *(nominal)*	Functions as a noun; replaceable by *it*; can be subject or object	***Driving** is tiring.*

The *very* test: *very interesting* ✓ (adjective) vs **very driving the lorry* ✗ (participle).
The *seem* test: *the story seems convincing* ✓ (adjective) vs **the man seems driving* ✗ (participle).
Some -ed forms have drifted so far they have their own meanings: *a drunken argument, a learned professor, a crooked path* — pronunciation can even change (learn-ed, crook-ed).

Part A – Classify with Justification

Classify each bold form: P (participle), A (participial adjective), or G (gerund). Cite the test that decides it.

#	Sentence	Class + test
1	The results were **alarming**.	
2	The siren **alarming** the residents was a false alert.	
3	**Alarming** the residents unnecessarily is irresponsible.	
4	He seemed genuinely **surprised** by the outcome.	
5	**Surprised** by the outcome, he said nothing.	
6	Her **chosen** field was marine biology.	

7	The committee's **choosing** of the venue took weeks.	
8	The play was extremely **moving**.	

Part B – Ambiguity Analysis

> **Each sentence is ambiguous between two categories. Give both readings and state what disambiguates them.**

1. "They are entertaining."

2. "She found the lecture notes missing."

3. "Visiting relatives can be exhausting."

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Absolute Constructions

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C1 (CEFR)

Reference: Participle Clauses with Their Own Subject

An **absolute construction** is a participle clause with its **own subject**, different from the subject of the main clause. It is grammatically detached ("absolute" = freed) from the main clause and adds circumstance, cause, or accompanying detail. It is a mark of formal, literary, or academic style.

Example	Analysis
The weather being fine, we decided to walk.	subject (*the weather*) + present participle; causal
All things considered, the project succeeded.	subject (*all things*) + past participle; fixed expression
She stood at the podium, **her hands trembling slightly**.	subject + present participle; accompanying detail (very common in fiction)
The negotiations having failed, both sides prepared for a strike.	subject + perfect participle; prior cause
He signed the contract, **his objections notwithstanding**.	fossilised absolute (notwithstanding)
With the deadline approaching, the team worked late.	*with* + absolute: the augmented absolute, more common in neutral style

Part A – Identify and Analyse

> **Underline the absolute construction. Identify its subject and participle, and state its meaning relation to the main clause (cause, time, accompanying circumstance).**

1. The bridge having collapsed, all traffic was diverted through the village.

2. She read the letter slowly, tears welling in her eyes.

3. With the results now published, the debate can begin in earnest.

4. The formalities completed, the delegates moved to the conference hall.

Part B – Build Absolutes

> **Combine each pair into one sentence using an absolute construction. Do not use a conjunction.**

1. The rain had stopped. We continued our journey.

2. Her voice was shaking. She finished the speech.

3. The funds were exhausted. The programme was suspended.

4. The concert was over. The crowd streamed towards the exits.

Part C – Style Judgement

> **Rewrite each absolute construction as an ordinary subordinate clause. Then state which version suits the context given, and why.**

1. "The witness having contradicted herself twice, the defence moved to dismiss." *(court report)*

2. "Dinner finished, the family drifted into the sitting room." *(novel)*

3. "The weather being unpredictable, participants should bring waterproofs." *(event information sheet)*

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Participles in Formal and Academic Style

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C1 (CEFR)

Reference: What Participles Do for Academic Prose

Function	Example	Effect
Compression — reduced relatives pack information densely	*data collected over five years* vs *data that was collected over five years*	fewer words, tighter noun phrases
Sequencing — perfect participles order research steps	*Having established validity, we turn to reliability.*	logical flow without heavy connectives
Hedged framing — participial disjuncts frame claims	*Broadly speaking, the model performs well.*	stance-marking
Objective distance — passives + participles suppress the researcher	*Participants assigned to the control group received a placebo.*	agent backgrounded

The danger: stacked participles create ambiguity. "*Analysing the results obtained using the revised method applied in the second trial…*" — which participle modifies what? Formal style prizes compression, but only up to the point where attachment stays clear.

Part A – Compress

> **Rewrite each sentence using participle structures to achieve academic compression. Aim to reduce the word count without losing information.**

1. The questionnaire, which was distributed to 500 households and which was returned by 62% of them, forms the basis of the study.

2. After the team had excluded the incomplete responses, they analysed the remaining data.

3. The theory, which was first proposed in the 1970s and which has been modified many times since then, remains influential.

4. Because the sample was drawn exclusively from urban areas, it may not represent rural populations.

Part B – Diagnose the Stacking Problem

Each sentence over-compresses. Identify the ambiguity or attachment problem, then rewrite for clarity (you may re-expand one participle into a full clause).

1. "The variables measured using instruments calibrated following procedures established in earlier studies showed significant variation."

2. "Students taught by teachers trained in the new method assessed by external examiners performed better."

Part C – Register Transformation

This informal passage needs to be rewritten in formal academic style. Use at least four participle structures (reduced relatives, perfect participle, initial -ed clause, absolute or with-absolute).

We did a survey and 300 people answered it. After we checked the answers, we threw out the ones that weren't complete. The people who took part came from three cities. Because the study was quite small, we can't say our results apply to everyone.

Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Critical Analysis and Extended Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C1 (CEFR)

Part A – Critical Reading

Seen from a distance, the debate over participles appears trivial — a squabble over labels. Examined more closely, it reveals a genuine tension in how grammar is taught. Generations of students, drilled in the rule that a participle must attach to the subject, have learnt to fear the dangling modifier as an error marking them out as careless. Yet the rule itself, applied mechanically, would condemn expressions no editor questions: *judging by appearances, considering the alternatives, having said that*. The rule being unable to account for its own exceptions, we might ask whether it is a rule at all — or rather a convention, its authority resting on the practice of careful writers, not on logic. Speaking practically, the real question for any participle is not whether it dangles but whether it misleads.

Questions

1. The passage opens with two parallel past participle clauses. Identify them, state what each attaches to, and explain the rhetorical effect of the parallelism.

2. Find the absolute construction in the passage. Identify its subject and participle, and explain why the writer chose an absolute rather than a *because*-clause.

3. "drilled in the rule…" — analyse the full participle structure modifying *students*. What does its length and position contribute?

4. The passage both discusses and deliberately uses "acceptable danglers". Identify two, and explain how they support the writer's argument performatively.

5. "its authority resting on the practice of careful writers" — classify this structure precisely.

Part B – Extended Writing

Write a formal discursive paragraph (**180–220 words**) on: "*Grammar rules should describe what careful writers do, not prescribe what all writers must do.*"

Include and underline: (1) an initial past participle clause; (2) a perfect participle clause; (3) an absolute construction; (4) a reduced relative; (5) one deliberately used "acceptable dangler" (fixed participial expression).

Word count: _____ Features: _____ / 5

Score: _____ / 35

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only — C1 Level, Participles

Worksheet 1 – Part A

#	Class and test
1	**A — gradable (*very alarming*); follows *were* predicatively as adjective**
2	**P — takes a direct object (*the residents*); *very alarming the residents fails**
3	**G — subject of the sentence; replaceable by *it*; nominal function (with object retained)**
4	**A — passes the *seem* test and is graded by *genuinely***
5	**P — heads a participial clause with a *by*-agent; clausal, not gradable in this position**
6	**A — attributive, non-clausal; meaning lexicalised ("selected"); *very chosen fails but adjective status shown by fixed attributive use (compare *drunken, learned*)**
7	**G — verbal noun territory: possessive subject, *of*-phrase; fully nominal**
8	**A — graded by *extremely***

> *Item 6 rewards discussion: chosen is not gradable, yet it functions attributively like an adjective. Not all adjectives are gradable (compare former, main) — so the very test proves adjectivehood when it succeeds but doesn't disprove it when it fails. Use this to teach test logic, not just test results.*

Worksheet 1 – Part B

#	Readings
1	**(i) adjective: they are fun to be with (gradable — *very entertaining*); (ii) participle in progressive: they are hosting guests (can take an object: *entertaining clients*). Context or an object disambiguates.**
2	**(i) *missing* = adjective complement: the notes were absent; (ii) participle reading (marginal): she found the notes in the process of going missing. Reading (i) is dominant; *find + obj + adj* pattern.**
3	**(i) gerund + object: the act of visiting relatives tires you; (ii) participle premodifying: relatives who are visiting tire you. Classic ambiguity; number agreement can disambiguate (visiting relatives IS vs ARE exhausting).**

Worksheet 2 – Part A

1 "The bridge having collapsed" — subj: the bridge; perfect participle; cause. **2** "tears welling in her eyes" — subj: tears; present participle; accompanying circumstance. **3** "With the results now published" — with-absolute; subj: the results; past participle; cause/time. **4** "The formalities completed" — subj: the formalities; past participle; time (once they were completed).

Worksheet 2 – Part B (model answers)

1 The rain having stopped, we continued our journey. **2** Her voice shaking, she finished the speech. (or: She finished the speech, her voice shaking.) **3** The funds (having been) exhausted, the programme was suspended. **4** The concert over, the crowd streamed towards the exits. *(verbless absolute — fully acceptable)*

> *Item 4 shows the verbless absolute (the concert over) — no participle at all, yet the same construction. Worth pointing out as evidence that the absolute is a clause-type, not merely a participle pattern.*

Worksheet 2 – Part C

1 "Since the witness had contradicted herself twice, the defence moved to dismiss." The absolute suits the court-report register — compressed, formal, detached. Either works; the absolute is more marked.
2 "When dinner was finished, the family drifted…" The absolute is better for the novel: it creates a scene-setting rhythm typical of narrative prose.
3 "Because the weather is unpredictable, participants should bring waterproofs." The subordinate clause is better: an information sheet needs plain accessibility, and *the weather being unpredictable* is stiff for that genre.

Worksheet 3 – Part A (model answers)

1 The questionnaire, distributed to 500 households and returned by 62%, forms the basis of the study. **2** Having excluded the incomplete responses, the team analysed the remaining data. **3** The theory, first proposed in the 1970s and modified many times since, remains influential. **4** Drawn exclusively from urban areas, the sample may not represent rural populations.

Worksheet 3 – Part B

1 Ambiguity: does "calibrated following procedures…" modify *instruments*, and does "established in earlier studies" modify *procedures*? The chain is parseable but heavy. Rewrite: "The variables were measured using instruments that had been calibrated according to procedures established in earlier studies; they showed significant variation."
2 Attachment crisis: "assessed by external examiners" could modify *students, teachers,* or *the method*. Rewrite: "Students who were assessed by external examiners performed better if their teachers had been trained in the new method." (or whichever meaning is intended — the point is that the original fails to specify).

Worksheet 3 – Part C (model answer)

> *Model: "A survey was distributed and completed by 300 respondents. Having screened the responses, the researchers excluded those that were incomplete. Participants, drawn from three cities, formed the final sample. The study being limited in scale, its findings cannot be generalised to the wider population." — Accept any version deploying four correct participle structures in consistent formal register.*

Worksheet 4 – Part A

Q1: "Seen from a distance" / "Examined more closely" — both attach to *the debate*. The parallelism stages the essay's move from superficial to careful analysis; the grammar enacts the argument.
Q2: "The rule being unable to account for its own exceptions" — subj: *the rule*; participle: *being*. The absolute detaches the cause into its own compressed unit, giving the reasoning a formal, quasi-logical air — apt for a passage about rules; a *because*-clause would be flatter.

Q3: "drilled in the rule that a participle must attach to the subject" — past participle clause postmodifying *students*, with an embedded appositive *that*-clause. Its length enacts the drilling it describes; its position (between subject and verb) suspends the main clause, mimicking the students' schooling before their "learning to fear".
Q4: "Judging by appearances" (cited) and "Speaking practically" (used) — the latter is a live example: it does not attach to any subject, yet no reader stumbles. Using the constructions while defending them is a performative argument. (Also acceptable: "considering the alternatives", "having said that" as cited examples.)
Q5: An absolute construction: subject *its authority* + present participle *resting* — embedded inside the noun phrase headed by "a convention".

Worksheet 4 – Part B: Marking Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Initial -ed clause	Correct passive attachment; punctuation; formal tone	0–5
Perfect participle	Temporal/logical precedence exploited, not decorative	0–5
Absolute construction	Own subject; well-integrated; register-appropriate	0–5
Reduced relative	Correct voice; unambiguous attachment	0–5
Fixed disjunct used knowingly	Deployed with clear rhetorical purpose	0–5
Argument & register	180–220 words; coherent position; formal-academic	0–5