

Absolute Definition:

A sentence part describing the rest of the sentence in which it appears. Absolutes are *almost* complete sentences. As a test, you can make every absolute a sentence by adding *was* or *were*.

Example: He sat down at the table, **the cup in both hands**, and tried to drink.

Hal Borland, *When the Legends Die*

Test: The cup *was* in both hands.

Another way to identify an absolute is that often absolutes begin with these words: *my, his, her its, our their* (possessive pronouns). The pronoun can be stated or implied.

Examples:

Visible possessive pronouns: The old willow tree was enormous, **its sprawling branches going up like reaching arms with many long-fingered hands**. (The word *its* is visible before sprawling branches, stated not implied.)

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*

Invisible possessive pronoun: An old man was standing before them, **wide, pale eyes shining like moons through the gloom of the shop**. (The word *his* is invisible before wide, pale eyes, implied not stated.)

J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Appositive Definition:

A noun phrase identifying a person, place, or thing named in a sentence. Appositives often begin with the words *a, an, or the*. They always answer one of these questions:

Who is he? Who is she? Who are they? (people)

What is it? What are they? (places or things)

Examples:

Identifying People: Don Gross was a tough guy, **an ex-Marine who had never lost his military manner**.

~Michael Crichton, *Prey*

Identifying Places: Once they were in her office, **a small room with a large, welcoming fire**, Professor McGonagall motioned to Harry and Hermione to sit down.

~H.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

Identifying things: When it was quite late, he murmured something, went to a closet, and drew forth an evil weapon, **a long yellowish tube ending in bellows and a trigger**.

~Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*.

Participle Definition:

A verbal ending in *-ing* or *-ed* used to describe. A verbal is a verb that also works like another part of speech.

Participles show action, so they act like verbs, but they also describe, so they act like adjectives.

Present participles always end in *-ing*. Unlike *ing* main verbs, which cannot be removed from a sentence, participles are removable.

Examples:

Verb (not removable): Harry was **feeling slightly more cheerful**.

Present participle (verbal, removable): **Feeling slightly more cheerful**, Harry helped himself to sausages and fried tomatoes.

~J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

Past participle usually end in *ed*. Unlike *ed* main verbs, which cannot be removed from a sentence, past participles are removable. (Note: Most past participles end in *ed*; others- by far the minority- end in *en*(forgiven) or end irregularly (*sung*). This book treats only the most common- those with *ed*- because once you learn the *ed* participles, you will intuit and use the others.)

Examples:

Verb (not removable): The bats were **wrapped in their brown wings**.

Past participle (verbal, removable): High up under the roof, in the farthest corner of the barn, the bats were hanging upside down, **wrapped in their brown wings**.

~Randal Jarrell, *The Bat Poet*

Good writers sometimes use multiple participles within the same sentence.

Present participles: The men within the door stared at one another, **shifting on their books, twiddling their fingers, and holding onto their hip belts**. (*three*)

~Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*