

6.4.5 Past participle Vs Simple past verb

Verbs in English are classified as *regular* and *irregular* verbs, based on the forms of the verbs in *simple past tense* and *past participle*.

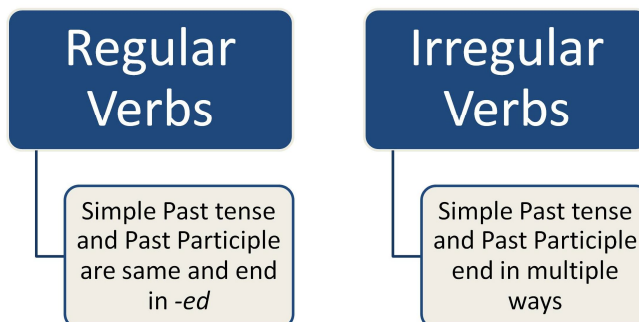


Figure 31: Regular and Irregular Verbs

Some examples of Regular Verbs

Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
Laugh	Laughed	laughed
Start	Started	started
Wash	Washed	washed
Wink	Winked	winked
Dance	Danced	danced
Love	Loved	loved
Play	Played	played
Act	Acted	acted
Disappoint	Disappointed	disappointed

Some examples of Irregular Verbs

Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle
Arise	Arose	arisen
Give	Gave	given
Go	Went	gone
Grow	Grew	grown
Sing	Sang	sung
Sink	sank <i>or</i> sunk	sunk
Swing	Swung	swung
Take	Took	taken
Throw	Threw	thrown

Distinguishing between Simple past tense and Past participle

Simple past tenses are main *verbs* in a sentence, while *past participles* are *adjectives* (refer to section 2.2.5 for more on *past participles* and how *participles* are *adjective* forms of verbs). Distinguishing *simple past tenses* from *past participles* becomes challenging especially in *regular* verbs, because *regular* verbs have the *same* simple past tense and past participles forms.

Figure 32 below depicts some key structures where verb form is used as *past participle*.

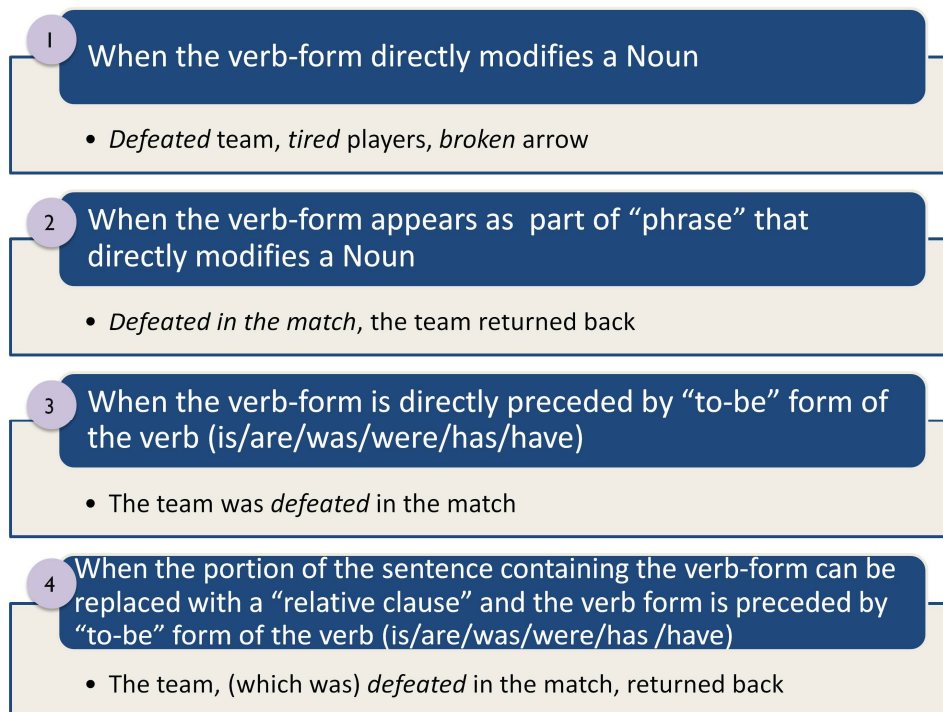


Figure 32: Different ways in which Past Participles are used

Case 1: When the verb-form directly modifies a noun

Participles of this category are easiest to identify. Remember all participles are *adjectives*. Hence, if a verb-form *directly* modifies a noun, clearly that verb-form is acting as an *adjective*. Hence, that verb-form will be a *participle*. Example:

*The **defeated** team returned back to its home country.*

- The verb-form *defeated* directly modifies (describes/is an attribute of) the noun *team*. Hence, *defeated* acts as an adjective, and is a *participle*.

*The **tired** players took a day off.*

- The verb-form *tired* directly modifies (describes/is an attribute of) the noun *players*. Hence, *tired* acts as an adjective, and is a *participle*.

*The **broken** arrow missed the target.*

- The verb-form *broken* directly modifies (describes/is an attribute of) the noun *arrow*. Hence, *broken* acts as an adjective, and is a *participle*.

Case 2: When the verb-form appears as part of phrase that directly modifies a noun

In this category, rather than *single* word verb-forms directly modifying nouns, the entire *phrase* (group of words) modifies noun. Hence, that verb-form will be a *participle*. Example:

Defeated in the match, the team returned back.

- The entire phrase *defeated in the match* modifies (describes/is an attribute of) the noun *the team*. Hence, the phrase *Defeated in the match* is a *participle phrase*.

Tired after the long match, the players took a day off.

- The entire phrase *Tired after the long match* modifies (describes/is an attribute of) the noun *the players*. Hence, the phrase *Tired after the long match* is a *participle phrase*.

Broken at its tip, the arrow missed the target.

- The entire phrase *Broken at its tip* modifies (describes/is an attribute of) the noun *the arrow*. Hence, the phrase *Broken at its tip* is a *participle phrase*.

Case 3: When the verb-form is directly preceded by “to-be form of the verb” (is/are/was/were/has/have)

The team was ***defeated*** in the match.

- The verb-form *defeated* is directly preceded by the *to-be* form of the verb *was*. Hence, *defeated* is a *participle*.

The players were ***tired***.

- The verb-form *tired* is directly preceded by the *to-be* form of the verb *were*. Hence, *tired* is a *participle*.

The tip of the arrow was ***broken***.

- The verb-form *broken* is directly preceded by the *to-be* form of the verb *was*. Hence, *broken* is a *participle*.

Case 4: After converting the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form, into a relative clause, if the verb form is preceded by to-be form of the verb (is/are/was/were/has/have)

Remember that participles are *adjectives*, and *relative clauses* (Section 2.2.3 *Dependent clauses*) are also *adjectives*. So, when the portion of the sentence containing the *verb-form* is *replaced* with a *relative clause* and the verb form in the relative clause is preceded by *to-be* form of the verb (is/are/was/were/has/have), then we can conclude that the verb-form is a *participle*.

The team, ***defeated in the match***, returned back.

- In this sentence, the intent is to determine whether *defeated* is a simple past tense *verb* or a *past participle*. Let's convert the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form (*defeated in the match* in this case) into a *relative clause*. The logical way to do this would be:

The team, (***which was defeated in the match***), returned back.

So, we have converted the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form (*defeated in the match*) into a *relative clause* (*which was defeated in the match*). Now, since the verb-form (*defeated*) in this relative clause is preceded by *to-be* form of the verb *was*, we can conclude that *defeated* is a *past participle* in the original sentence. Also note that the main *verb* in the sentence is *returned*.

Let's take another example:

The players, ***tired after the long match***, took a day off.

- In this sentence, the intent is to determine whether *tired* is a simple past tense *verb* or a *past participle*. Let's convert the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form (*tired after a long match* in this case) into a *relative clause*. The logical way to do this would be:

The players, (who were) tired after the long match, took a day off.

So, we have converted the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form (*tired after a long match*) into a *relative clause* (*who were tired after a long match*). Now, since the verb-form (*tired*) in this relative clause is preceded by *to-be* form of the verb *were*, we can conclude that *tired* is a *past participle* in the original sentence. Also note that the main *verb* in the sentence is *took*.

Another example:

The arrow, broken at its tip, missed the target.

- In this sentence, the intent is to determine whether *broken* is a simple past tense *verb* or a *past participle*. Let's convert the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form (*broken at its tip* in this case) into a *relative clause*. The logical way to do this would be:

The arrow, (which was) broken at its tip, missed the target.

So, we have converted the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form (*broken at its tip*) into a *relative clause* (*which was broken at its tip*). Now, since the verb-form (*broken*) in this relative clause is preceded by *to-be* form of the verb *was*, we can conclude that *broken* is a *past participle* in the original sentence. Also note that the main *verb* in the sentence is *missed*.

Now in this same sentence, let us see whether *missed* is a simple past tense *verb* or a *past participle*. The *core* of the sentence (after removing the non-essential *broken at its tip*) is:

The arrow missed the target.

Let's convert the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form (*missed the target* in this case) into a *relative clause*. The logical way to do this would be:

The arrow, (which) missed the target.

So, we have converted the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form (*missed the target*) into a *relative clause* (*which missed the target*). Now, since the verb-form (*missed*) in this relative clause is *not* preceded by any *to-be* form of the verb, we can conclude that *missed* is *not* a *past participle*, but a *simple past tense verb* in the original sentence.

A sentence based on GMATPrep question (*The growth of the railroads led to the abolition of local times...*):

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, an estimated three-quarters of all people alive were trapped in some form of slavery, rooted in social stratification and differed from one society to another.

Analysis: Since the *intended meaning* determines which parts of a sentence should be *grammatically similar*, let us start by understanding the intended meaning of the sentence. The portion of the sentence *rooted in social stratification and differed from one society to another* is intended to modify (describe) *slavery*. There are two characteristics of *slavery* described: *rooted in social stratification* and *differed from one society to another*. Hence, these two parts of the sentence comprise *logically similar* parts of the sentence, and so, these two parts must be *grammatically similar* as well.

The underlined portion above has two *verb forms*: *rooted* and *differed*. As depicted in case 4 in Figure 32 above, let us *replace* this portion of the sentence with a *relative clause*. The most logical way to do it would be:

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, an estimated three-quarters of all people alive were trapped in some form of slavery, (which was) rooted in social stratification and (which) differed from one society to another.

So, we have converted the portion of the sentence containing the verb-form (*rooted in social stratification and differed from one society to another*) into a *relative clause* (*which was rooted in social stratification and which differed from one society to another*). Now, since the *first* verb-form (*rooted*) in this relative clause is preceded by *to-be* form of the verb *was*, we can conclude that *rooted* is a *past participle* in the original sentence; on the other hand, the *second* verb-form (*differed*) in this relative clause is *not* preceded by *to-be* form of the verb, and so, we can conclude that *differed* is *not* a *past participle*, but a *simple past tense verb* in the original sentence.

This analysis underscores the issue with the original sentence. The two *logically similar* parts in the original sentence are:

- a) rooted in social stratification and
- b) differed from one society to another

As per requirements of parallelism (section 6.2.1), these two logically similar parts must be *grammatically similar* as well. However, as we analyzed above, the first part is a *participle* (*adjective*, since *participles* are *adjectives*), while the second part is a *verb* (simple past tense verb). Hence, the two parts are not *grammatically similar*. We fix the sentence as:

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, an estimated three-quarters of all people alive were trapped in some form of slavery, rooted in social stratification and differing from one society to another.

This is now a valid sentence, because *rooted in social stratification* and *differing from one society to another* are both *participial* phrases (*past* participle and *present* participle respectively). As is appropriate, these *participial* phrases (*participles* are *adjectives*) modify (describe) the noun: *slavery*. It should be noted that from a *parallelism* perspective, because the past participle *rooted* modifies *slavery*, the present participle *differing*, which is in a parallel structure with the past participle *rooted*, will also modify *slavery*.