

## TOEFL Structure Skill 4 : BE CAREFUL OF PRESENT PARTICIPLES

A present participle is the -ing form the verb (talking, playing). In the Structure section of the TOEFL test a present participle can cause confusion because it can be either a part of the verb or an adjective. It is part of the verb when it is preceded by some form of the verb be.

The man *is talking* to his friend  
Verb

In this sentence talking is part of the verb because it is accompanied by is.

A present participle is an adjective when it is not accompanied by some form of the verb be.

The man *talking* to his friend has a beard.  
Adjective

In this sentence talking is an adjective and not part of the verb because it is not accompanied by some form of be. The verb in this sentence is has.

The following example shows how a present participle can be confused with the verb in the Structure section of the TOEFL test.

Example 1:

The child ..... Playing in the yard is my son.

- (a) Now
- (b) Is
- (c) He
- (d) Was

In this example, if you look at only the first words of the sentence, it appears that child is the subject and playing is part of the verb. If you think that playing is part of the verb, you might choose answer (B), is, or answer (D), was, to complete the verb. However, these two answer are incorrect because playing is not part of the verb. You should recognize that playing is a participial adjective rather than a verb because there is another verb in the sentence (is). In this sentence there is a complete subject (child) and a complete verb (is), so this sentence does not need another subject or verb. The best answer here is (A).

The following chart outlines what you should remember about present participles :

### PRESENT PARTICIPLES

A present participle is the -ing form of the verb. The present participle can be (1) part of the verb or (2) an adjective. It is part of the verb when it is accompanied by some form of the verb be. It is an adjective when it is not accompanied by some form of the verb be.

The boy is *standing* in the corner

The boy *standing* in the corner was naughty

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