

Non-finite clauses

The main clause in a sentence tells the reader what a subject of the sentence is doing e.g. Peter walked to the shop.

A non-finite clause extends the sentence and tells the reader about a second thing that the subject is doing at the same time e.g. Peter walked to the shop, whistling loudly to himself.

Top tip: It must be possible for the subject of the sentence to do both things. A mistake children often make is to write a sentence that has the subject doing something that is not possible e.g. Peter ran to the shop, hopping on one leg. You cannot both be running and hopping simultaneously!

Non-finite clauses begin within a verb ending in -ing or -ed.

“ing” verbs – smashing, washing

“ed” verbs - smashed, watched

1. They can go at the end of the sentence, after the main clause, and will be separated by a comma.

The boy ate a huge slice of cake, stuffing it into his mouth.

Sally scratched her head, thinking about what to do next.

2. They also be moved to the start of the sentence before the main clause. Here they are called fronted non-finite clauses and are followed by a comma.

Stuffing it into his mouth, the boy ate a huge slice of cake.

Thinking about what to do next, Sally scratched her head.

3. Non-finite clauses can also be stacked.

Reaching for her phone, checking that no one nearby could overhear her, Sam decided now was the right time to send her secret message to the HQ.

Underline the non-finite clauses in the sentence

1. Identify the main clause the sentence- subject and predicate
2. Find the “ing” or “ed” verb

Licking his lips impatiently, John reached for the sticky doughnut.

Tom stood on the rickety bridge, looking out at the horizon.

Frightened by what lay in front of her, Lucy walked into the forest.

In the blazing sun, the cat sat under the tree, intrigued by the passing traffic.

Angered by the mess that was made, Andy shouted loudly at the dog.

Watching the night sky, Claire dreamt about going into space.

Taking a deep breath, stretching her legs, looking into the distance, Jane waited for the starting gun to fire.

Challenge: Use all of these skills to write your own sentences