

There are many English words that can be used as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Read these examples:

Gerund-Verb functioning as a noun: Insulting your mother is a bad habit.

Adjective: His insulting behavior was hard to take.

Verb: She insults me every time I go there.

Noun: The insults hurt my feelings.

Gerund-Verb functioning as a noun: Encouraging your students will make them perform better.

Verb: She encourages her students to do their homework.

Adjective: The fact that he has stopped drinking is an encouraging sign.

Encourage does not have a noun form that is not a gerund.

Adjective: I feel energized after a swim.

Verb: She energizes the students by playing jazzy music before class starts.

Gerund-Verb functioning as a noun: Energizing your students before class with a little music might improve their performance.

Noun: I don't have the energy to hike fifteen miles.

Make three sentences with each of the words below. One should use the word as a gerund or a noun, one as a verb and one as an adjective or adverb.

amuse:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

flatter:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

soothe

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

aggravate:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Read these conversations with a partner. Talk about the meaning of the words underlined, then summarize what is happening in each conversation.

Jeff: What did you think of the play last night?

Ted: I thought it was one of the most lackluster performances I'd ever seen.

Jeff: The humor was a bit grim, I thought. Making jokes about a grisly murder scene was a bit much.

Ted: I agree that the murder scene was appalling. Next time, let's try to go to a more upbeat play.

Ginny: We just sat through the worst lecture. The subject matter should have been interesting, but the professor's insipid remarks put us all to sleep. Afterwards, Jeff made some incendiary comments, to the effect that the professor should be taken out and shot for giving such a bad lecture. Jeff can be a real agitator at times.

Stella: Jeff's boorish behavior really alarms me. How does he expect to do well here if he keeps making rude and inflammatory remarks about the lecturers.

Ginny: I agree. Jeff was doing much better for a while, but he seems to have reverted to his earlier demeanor. Saying someone should be shot is so egregious that he could be expelled if the professors heard of it. He'd better mind his p's and q's.

Sharon: How was your trip to east Africa. I understand you were doing a survey of educational practices in underdeveloped countries.

Lydia: It was phenomenal. We visited a small school in a tiny, rural village miles from any city. The children there are amazingly adroit at mental math. Their calculations are very quick and nearly always spot on. And it's not just one or two of the students. The majority of them appear to be math wizards. It's as if math ability is endemic to their village. The head of the school is adamant that all children spend at least two hours a day working on math problems and puzzles.

Sharon: Of course, there are inherent problems with demanding students spend so much time on math. I wonder if they are falling behind in reading and history because of the emphasis on math.

Lydia: I didn't see that they were lagging in any area. They appeared to be erudite in a variety of subjects. And the students were very keen to learn. We have much to learn from their methods.

Discuss:

In the last conversation, the participants seemed to have been surprised to find really good education occurring in a small, rural area of an underdeveloped nation. Do you think those of us who live in developed nations are often condescending to those from more less wealthy countries? Are city people condescending to rural people? Does this happen in your country? Does this attitude have an effect on the politics?