

What are verbal nouns?

A verbal noun is a noun derived from a verb. It exhibits all of the properties of ordinary nouns and none of the properties of verbs.

A verbal noun can have plural forms just like a noun. It can also occur with determiners and adjectives. In English, verbal nouns are formed with a variety of suffixes. Examples are given below:

arrive (verb) / arrival (noun)

decide (verb) / decision (noun)

destroy (verb) / destruction (noun)

fly (verb) / flight (noun)

He sudden arrival surprised me.

He has not yet announced his decision.

He boarded a flight to Chicago.

A verbal noun can be identical to its source verb. Examples are: return (verb) / return (noun), attack (verb) / attack (noun).

Gerunds

A verbal noun can be formed with the suffix -ing. Examples are: run (verb) / running (noun), speak (verb) / speaking (noun). Note that a verbal noun should not be confused with a gerund, although many grammarians make this error.

A gerund, though it looks exactly like a verbal noun, has many properties of a verb and can take objects. It can also be modified by an adverb.

Smoking cigarettes is injurious to health. (Here the -ing form smoking is a gerund and takes the object cigarettes.)

I like watching movies. (Gerund – watching, object – movies)

A verbal noun, on the other hand, has no verbal properties.

The deliberate bowling of bouncers should be banned. (Here the -ing form bowling is a verbal noun because it exhibits nominal properties: taking determiners, adjectives and prepositional phrases.)