

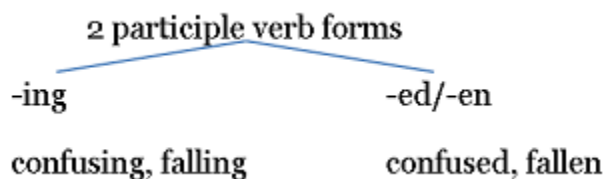
## Aggie Grammar Guide: Adjectives That Come from Verbs

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One type of adjective derives from and gets its meaning from verbs. It is often called a participial adjective because it is formed from a verb's participle form. To learn more about adjectives in general, see the adjective glossary entry.

### How to Form Adjectives That Come from Verbs

There are two types of participial adjectives: one comes from the verb's *present participle* (**-ing** form) and the other comes from the *past participle* (**-ed/-en** form, but often irregular). Take the verbs **confuse** and **fall** as an example:



While the forms derive from a verb (**to confuse**; **to fall**), they can function as adjectives to describe a noun. Note that not all verbs can do this; you can check whether the verb you want to use can describe a noun by searching for it in online published writing, books, magazines, newspapers, or academic journals.

Using participial adjectives can help reduce wordiness from multiple phrases. In this example, the adjective is bolded and the changed phrase is underlined.

- **Example:** Making friends can help you create connections in case you need to copy notes or ask for information on something you might have missed.
- **Revision:** Making friends can help you create connections in case you need to copy notes or ask for **missed** information.

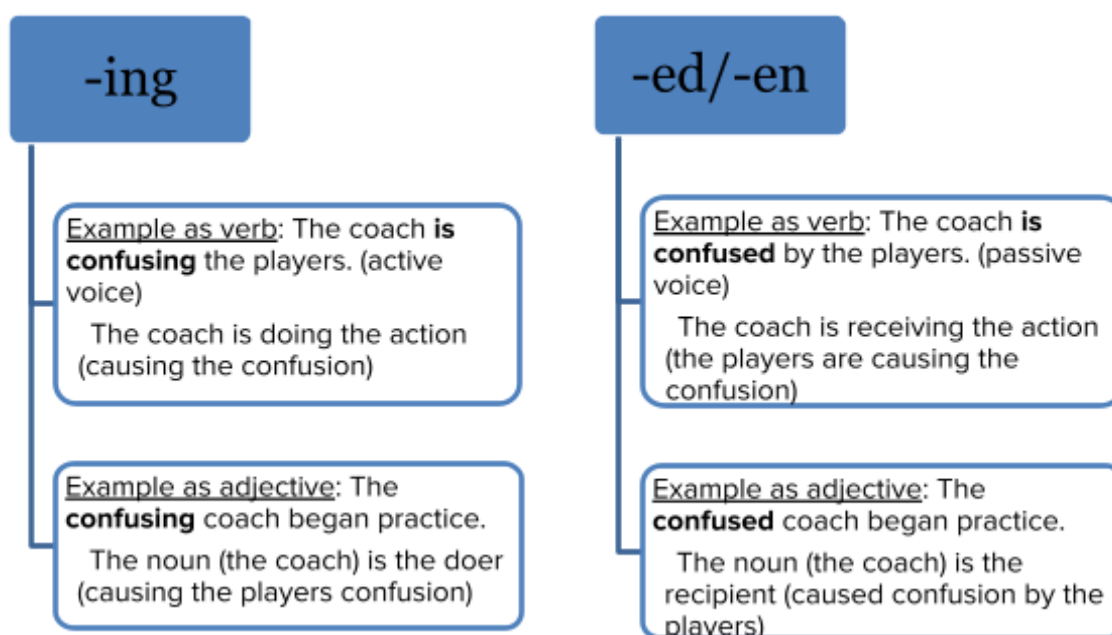
The phrase “on something you might have missed” describes the **information** but is wordy. The only necessary word in this phrase is **missed**, and this single word can be placed in front of the noun **information** as an adjective. The revision “missed information” accurately describes the original sentence and uses fewer words, so it is preferable.

## Meaning Difference between the Two Forms

As verbs, the **-ing** ending indicates *progressive* form (also known as the *continuous* form) and can only be used in the *active voice*. The **-ed/-en** verb ending indicates *perfect* form and is the form used for *passive voice* sentences. When verbs become adjectives, they no longer function as verbs but still have a verb-like meaning. As a general pattern, the **-ing** adjective has an active or continuous meaning, and the **-ed/-en** adjective has a passive or completed meaning.

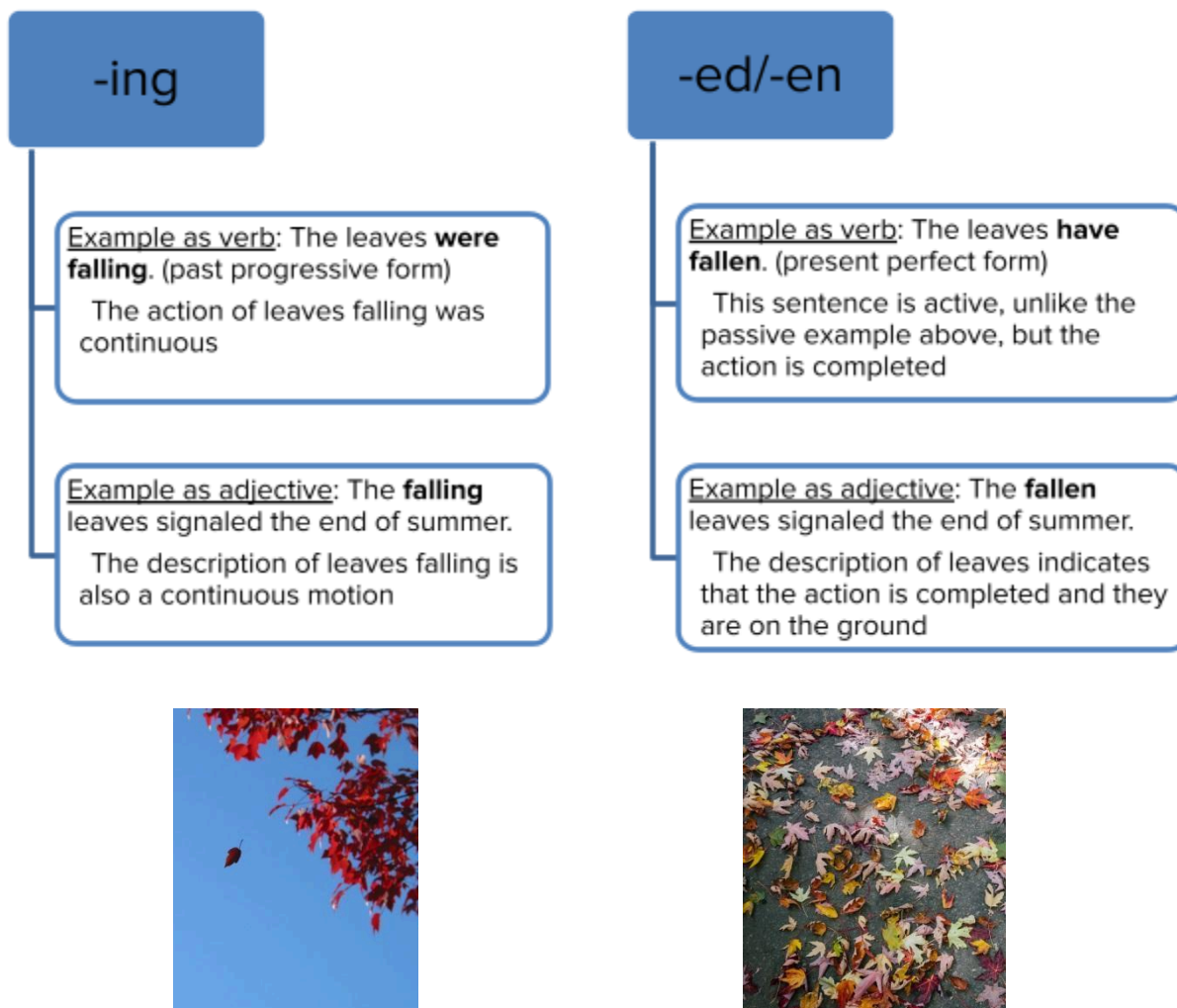
When choosing which adjective form to use, ask yourself if you are (1) describing an active or passive meaning (only true for transitive verbs that can be made passive) and (2) describing a continuous or completed state.

Let's start with the difference between **confusing** and **confused**, starting with their use as verbs. Ask yourself whether you want the active or passive meaning of **confuse**.



Thus, the choice between **confusing** and **confused** as an adjective is a similar decision for choosing active or passive voice for the verb form.

Now let's look at the difference between **falling** and **fallen**, starting with their use as verbs. Ask yourself whether you want the continuous or completed meaning of **fall**.



Thus, the choice between **falling** (image on the left) and **fallen** (image on the right) as an adjective is a similar decision for choosing the progressive or perfect form for the verb.

This same decision applies to more abstract and academic concepts although the meaning differences may be more subtle. Take **increasing** and **increased** for example.

- Example: Nature provides climbers with this **increasing** opportunity.
- Example: Nature provides climbers with this **increased** opportunity.

The first example means that the opportunity still has the potential to go up (continuous meaning). The second example means that the opportunity is higher compared to something else (completed meaning).

Which pattern applies to which adjectives? For intransitive verbs, the active/passive meaning (**confusing/confused**) will never apply; you can understand their adjective meanings as continuous/completed (**falling/fallen**). Unfortunately, for all other verbs there is no clear reason why some adjectives are explained like **confusing/confused** (active/passive meaning) while others are explained like **falling/fallen** (continuous/completed meaning). Try both explanations to see which makes more sense in your context.

## Missing Endings on Adjectives (Hard to Hear “d” Sound/Letter)

One common difficulty with the participial adjective ending in **-ed** is that it is hard to hear this ending pronounced in spoken conversations, especially for words ending in a vowel. This can lead speakers to leave off the ending of the word in writing, which makes the word look like a verb, not an adjective (e.g. \*The **confuse** coach began practice.).

To avoid this type of mistake, make sure you double-check that any word functioning as an adjective has the correct ending. If one word is describing another word (e.g. **advanced** placement; **relaxed** requirement; professor who is **retired**), it is likely an adjective.

## Adjective Tests

If you're not sure when a word is acting as an adjective, try either the *substitution test*, **very** test, or **seem** test. These tests can also be found in the Adjective glossary entry.

Substitution Test: Can you substitute the word with another adjective like **happy**, **weird**, or **old**?

- Example: There will always be people who have doubted themselves while there are others who are motivated and have a deep inspiration.
  - NO: The word **doubted** is not an adjective because this sentence is illogical: “\*There will always be people who have **happy** themselves...”
  - YES: The word **motivated** is an adjective because this sentence is logical: “...there are others who are **happy** and have a deep inspiration.”

**Very** Test (also found in online Adjectives glossary entry): Can you modify the word with **very**?

- Example: The sentences in the articles are not complex or long.
  - NO: The word **in** is not an adjective because this sentence is illogical: “\*The sentences **very** in the articles...”
  - YES: The words **complex** and **long** are adjectives because this sentence is logical: “...are not **very** complex or **very** long.”

**Seem** Test (also found in online Adjectives glossary entry): Can you logically fit the word into the sentence frame “[Noun/pronoun] seems \_\_\_\_.”?

- Example: Perhaps they leave this small yet meaningful detail aside because attending school for several years seems tedious.
  - YES: The word **meaningful** is an adjective because this sentence is logical: “It seems meaningful.”
  - NO: The word **detail** is not an adjective because this sentence is illogical: “\*It seems detail.”
  - NO: The word **school** is not an adjective because this sentence is illogical: “\*It seems school.”
  - YES: The word **tedious** is an adjective because this sentence is logical: “It seems tedious.”

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### Intermediate Practice

For each sentence, circle the correct form of the word in parenthesis. Some sentences require adjectives, and some require other parts of speech. To see more about the placement of adjectives in a sentence, check out the glossary.

Example:      *I think that that new one is better because I took out an unnecessary and (confuse/confusing/confused) sentence.*

Answer:      *I think that that new one is better because I took out an unnecessary and **confusing** sentence.*

- 1) Letting colleges rank each other would lead to a (bias/biasing/biased) result because colleges do not know anything about the others and are also competitive against each other.
- 2) These students barely speak or ask questions during lectures and make the class (bore/boring/bored).
- 3) It was true, but I felt more (stress/stressing/stressed) in my second quarter.
- 4) There will always be people doubting themselves and being put down while there are others that are (motivate/motivating/motivated) and have a deep inspiration.
- 5) Last quarter, it was very important for me to find some great stress relievers so that I could (relax/relaxing/relaxed) and learn better.
- 6) Last quarter, it was very important for me to find some great stress relievers so that I could feel more (relax/relaxing/relaxed) and learn better.
- 7) Sadly, these rankings are (prejudice/prejudicing/prejudiced) because one institution doesn't know anything about the other institution, so they rank each other based on the U.S News' information.

## Advanced Practice

For each set of sentences, first underline the participial adjective(s) in each sentence, and second, decide whether or not each one is used correctly. Correct any participial adjective mistakes you see (not every sentence will have a mistake).

Example:      *This newly design bicycle allows women to better ride it.*

Answer:      *This newly design bicycle allows women to better ride it. (Incorrect □ designed)*

- 1) In the data that Tough mentions, the gap between disadvantage students and white students obtaining twelve credits by Christmas was cut by half in no more than a year.
- 2) Also, students who are not good at sports or don't feel comfortable doing physical exercises might be concerning about their grades or how to pass the class.
- 3) The only thing that this publication may need to improve is the placement of the supported materials, such as case studies.
- 4) When I first arrived in Sacramento to begin my first school year, I was surprised and depressed when I heard many different racial comments such as "all Asians look the same" and "they all suck in English."
- 5) Readers may feel annoy if they need to jump back and forth to different pages of the magazine to finish the whole article.
- 6) It made me think of how great an impact a simple college student's essay admitting the fear of belonging had on entered freshmen who may be going through the same thing upperclassmen went through in the past.
- 7) This demonstrates how the author is reaching out to her audience to keep them engaged in the information she explained.

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### Answer Key

#### Intermediate Practice

- 1) Letting colleges rank each other would lead to a **biased** result because colleges do not know anything about the others and are also competitive against each other.
- 2) These students barely speak or ask questions during lectures and make the class **boring/bored**. (Either option works but has a different meaning. “Boring” describes the classroom atmosphere [active meaning] and “bored” describes the students’ feelings in the class as a result of those silent students [passive meaning]. In this second interpretation, “the class” is used to mean people.)
- 3) It was true, but I felt more **stress/stressed** in my second quarter. (Either option works here. “Stress” is the noun form so using it emphasizes stress as an object. “Stressed” is the adjective form so using it emphasizes the emotion of having stress. “Stressed” and not “stressing” is the correct adjective because “I” receives the feeling of “stress” and doesn’t cause it.)
- 4) There will always be people doubting themselves and being put down while there are others that are **motivating/motivated** and have a deep inspiration. (Either option works but has a different meaning. “Motivating” means that someone inspires others [active meaning] and “motivated” means that someone is encouraged to act by someone else’s actions [passive meaning]).
- 5) Last quarter, it was very important for me to find some great stress relievers so that I could **relax** and learn better.
- 6) Last quarter, it was very important for me to find some great stress relievers so that I could feel more **relaxed** and learn better.
- 7) Sadly, these rankings are **prejudiced** because one institution doesn't know anything about the other institution, so they rank each other based on the U.S News' information.



### Advanced Practice

- 1) In the data that Tough mentions, the gap between disadvantage students and white students obtaining twelve credits by Christmas was cut by half in no more than a year. (Incorrect, disadvantaged)
- 2) Also, students who are not good at sports or don't feel comfortable doing physical exercises might be concerning about their grades or how to pass the class. (Incorrect, concerned)
- 3) The only thing that this publication may need to improve is the placement of the supported materials, such as case studies. (Incorrect, supporting)
- 4) When I first arrived in Sacramento to begin my first school year, I was surprised and depressed when I heard many different racial comments such as "all Asians look the same" and "they all suck in English." (Correct; Correct)
- 5) Readers may feel annoy if they need to jump back and forth to different pages of the magazine to finish the whole article. (Incorrect, annoyed)
- 6) It made me think of how great an impact a simple college student's essay admitting the fear of belonging had on entered freshmen who may be going through the same thing upperclassmen went through in the past. (Incorrect, entering)
- 7) This demonstrates how the author is reaching out to her audience to keep them engaged in the information she explained. (Correct)