Review of Participles

Participles are verbal adjectives. That is, they share qualities of both verbs (tense, voice, and mood) and adjectives (case, number, and gender). Thus, participles are among the most efficient and useful words in existence.

Only three tenses exist in the participial mood: perfect, present, and future. Of these, the perfect is passive only; the present and future are active only.

The prevalent use of participles is to state the essential information which a clause could state, but in fewer words.

The man who had been wounded surrendered. (relative pronoun clause)
The man, (having been) wounded, surrendered. (participial phrase)

Formation of Participles

The perfect passive participle is simply the fourth principal part of a transitive verb. It is declined as a regular “2-1-2” adjective, like magnus, -a, -um. The literal translation is “having been + verb + -ed (or its equivalent).
vocatus, -a, -um  having been called
monitus, -a, -um  having been warned
rectus, -a, -um  having been ruled
captus, -a, -um  having been taken
auditus, -a, -um  having been heard

Nota bene: only verbs whose fourth principal part ends in –tus or –sus have the perfect passive participle.

Of the irregular verbs, only fero, ferre, tuli, latus, together with its compounds, consistently has the perfect passive participle, latus, -a, -um, “having been carried.”

Note how the participle agrees in case, number, and gender with the noun which it modifies. **Note also that the participle does not necessarily modify the subject.**

Puer in proelium missus fortiter pugnavit.
The boy, having been sent into the battle, fought bravely.
Naves ex portu ductae Trojam navigabant. The ships, having been led out of the harbor, sailed to Troy.

Milites urbem muris altis munitam circumvenerunt. The soldiers surrounded the city (having been surrounded) by a high wall.

Pedes tela ex ferro facta portabat. A footsoldier carried weapons made out of iron.

The present active participle is formed from the present stem of verbs of the first and second conjugation, by adding –ns to the stem. The genitive singular of the present participle –ns changes to –ntis, so that the participle’s declension stem ends in –nt-. The present participle is declined like an i-stem, third declension adjective. It is translated as “verb + -ing” or “while + verb + -ing.”

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<th>M/F</th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vocans</td>
<td>vocantes  [calling, while calling]</td>
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<td>vocantis</td>
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<td><strong>vocanti</strong></td>
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Filia matrem vocans in viam currebat.
The daughter while calling her mother ran into the street.

Senatores in foro dicentes pacem hortabantur. The senators speaking in the forum urged peace.

Cives cibum militibus muros defendentibus dederunt. The citizens gave food to the soldiers defending the walls.
The present participle of third and fourth conjugation verbs is formed on the first principal part, since these verbs have no present stem. The ending –**ens**, -**entis** is added to the root, and the participle is declined as an i-stem third declension adjective.

Third conjugation, regular verb *duco, ducere*: *duc-* + -**ens** = *ducens, ducentis*, etc.

Third conjugation, -**io** verb *capio, capere*: *capi-* + -**ens** = *capiens, capientis*, etc.

Fourth conjugation verb *audio, audire*: *audi-* + -**ens** = *audiens, audientis*, etc.

**Hostes** a castris suis *fugientes* omnia aedificia incendebant.  
The enemy, while fleeing from their camp, burned all the buildings.

**Custodes** *Catilinam* domum suum *munientem* prehendebant.  
The guards seized Catiline while (he was) fortifying his house.
The future active participle is formed on the fourth principal part of the verb, by inserting –ur- before the case ending (just as for the future active infinitive). The future participle is declined like a regular “2-1-2” adjective, such as magnus, -a, -um.

vocatus, -a, -um going to call, about to call, intending to call
monitatus, -a, -um going to warn, about to warn, intending to warn
rectatus, -a, -um going to rule, about to rule, intending to rule
capitus, -a, -um going to take, about to take, intending to take
auditatus, -a, -um going to listen, about to listen, intending to listen

The future participle is rarely used by itself. It is sometimes used when followed by a present, imperfect, or future form of the verb sum. This construction is called the active periphrastic conjugation; it expresses the intention of the subject, and should not be confused with the future indicative:

Caesar proelium commissurus est. Caesar intends to join battle.
Caesar proelium committet. Caesar will join battle (whether he wishes to or not).
Further Notes about Participles

1. Latin word order involving participles must be understood in order to be able to translate sentences correctly. Just as a subject noun and a verb are usually at opposite ends of a sentence, the noun and a modifying participle begin and end the participial phrase. Thinking about this another way, participial phrases are also translated “outside-in.” This very important arrangement is called bracketing.

Viri in castris ab hostibus capti ex provincia ducti sunt.

[The men, in the camp by the enemy, having been captured,] were led out of the province.

The men, having been captured in the camp by the enemy, were led out of the province.

2. Since participles are an abbreviated way of expressing the information in a subordinate clause, Latin participial phrases can be translated into English as subordinate clauses. Most commonly, relative pronoun clauses or temporal clauses are used; however, depending upon what the sentence says, any type of subordinate clause may be used.
Vir in proelio vulneratus fortiter pugnant.

The man having been wounded in battle is fighting bravely.

The man who was wounded in battle is fighting bravely.

The man, after he was wounded in battle, is fighting bravely.

The man, although he was wounded in battle, is fighting bravely.

3. When participial phrases are refined into English clauses, the sequence of tenses rule must be followed. The sequence of tenses rule for participles is identical to the rule for infinitives in indirect discourse: the perfect participle happened before the main verb; the present participle happens at the same time as the main verb; and the future participle, when used, happens later than the main verb.

Primary Sequence (main verb is present, future, or future perfect):

Vir in proelio vulneratus fortiter pugnat.
The man who was wounded in battle is fighting bravely.

Vir proelium committens fortiter pugnat.
The man who is joining battle is fighting bravely.
Vir proelium *commissurus* fortiter *pugnat*.
The man *who is about to join battle* is fighting bravely.

**Secondary Sequence (main verb is imperfect, perfect, or pluperfect):**

Vir in proelio *vulneratus* fortiter *pugnabat*.
The man *who had been wounded* in battle was fighting bravely.

Vir proelium *committens* fortiter *pugnabat*.
The man *who was joining battle* was fighting bravely.

Vir proelium *commissurus* fortiter *pugnabat*.
The man *who was about to join battle* was fighting bravely.