

## Participles vs. Predicate Adjectives

Finite verbs occur in two settings:

1. As independent full verbs:

He *sings* off key.

They *look* ill.

He *kissed* her on the ear.

She *finished* at ten.

2. As finite auxiliaries in verb phrases:

He *has* **sung** all of his life.

He *had* **sung** for years before his first lesson.

They *have* **looked** ill for weeks.

He *is* **kissing** her on the ear.

She *will* **finish** at ten.

She *did* **finish** at ten.

In group 2. the nonfinites (in bold) are present and past participles (*sung*, *looked*; and *kissing*) and infinitives (*finish*).

There can be a problem separating participles from predicate adjectives:

3. The guards were *relieved* by the night shift.
4. The guards were *relieved* by the news.

In 3. *relieved* is a past participle functioning as the head of the verb phrase "were relieved." In 4. *relieved* is a predicate adjective modifying *guards*. To distinguish them you can use the intensifier test:

5. \*The guards were very relieved by the night shift. (Doesn't work)
6. The guards were very relieved by the news. (Does work)