Vergil's Verb Tips: Gerunds and Gerundives

Gerunds are verbal nouns declined in the four oblique cases of the neuter singular. Nominative is supplied by the present active infinitive. Formation: add *–ndum* etc. to the present stem; 3rd-iō and 4th conjugation keep their *–i*.

	1st Conj.	2nd Conj.	3rd Conj.	3rd-iō	4th Conj.	Translation
Nom.	portāre	vidēre	crēdere	iacere	audīre	*x*-ing
Gen.	portandī	videndī	crēdendī	iaciendī	audiendī	of *x*-ing
Dat.	portandō	videndō	crēdendō	iaciendō	audiendō	to/for *x*-ing
Acc.	portandum	videndum	crēdendum	iaciendum	audiendum	*x*-ing
Abl.	portandō	videndō	crēdendō	iaciendō	audiendō	with/by/from/ in *x*-ing

Gerundives are verbal adjectives, identical in form to the gerund, but having all three genders, all five cases, and both numbers. They have the force of "needing to be *x*-ed" and are also known as the future passive participle (for details on participles, see Vergil's Verb Tips: The Participle).

Nom.	1st Conj.	2nd Conj.	3rd Conj.	3rd-iō	4th Conj.	Translation
Masc.	portandus	videndus	crēdendus	iacendus	audiendus	
Fem.	portanda	videnda	crēdenda	iacenda	audienda	(needing) to be *x*-ed
Neut.	portandum	videndum	crēdendum	iacendum	audiendum	

Special Use of Gerundive Only: Passive Periphrastic

The passive periphrastic (from the Greek for "talking around") is a unique construction in Latin (and Mrs. Turner's favorite) formed of the gerundive + a form of *sum* (+ dative of agent). It has the force of "must."

Mihi fugiendum est. I must flee (literally, "for me fleeing is needing to be done").

The force of the gerundive survives in many of its loanwords or derivatives in English. An addendum to the minutes is that which must be added. The legend on a map is that which must be read. A memorandum is that which must be remembered. A subtrahend is that amount that must be taken away from the minuend, the amount that must be reduced.

Gerund or Gerundive?

For many instances in Latin, one may use the gerund or gerundive interchangeably, but the Romans invariably preferred the gerundive adjective construction whenever there was a noun involved. Compare these examples, where gerunds are in this type and **gerundives are in this type.**

Genitive: amor videndī amīcōs   love for seeing friends
                amor amīcōrum videndōrum   same (lit., "love for friends to be seen")

                vēnit videndī amīcōs causā/grātiā   he came for the reason/sake of seeing friends
                vēnit amīcōrum videndōrum causā/grātiā   (lit., "for the reason/sake of friends to be seen)

                (equivalent to ad + accusative, purpose clause, and supine [see below])

Dative: praefert pecūniam videndō amīcōs   he prefers money to seeing his friends.
                praefert pecūniam amīcīs videndīs   (lit., "to friends to be seen")

Accusative: vēnit ad videndum amīcōs   he came for seeing friends.
                vēnit ad amīcōs videndōs   (lit., "for the purpose of friends to be seen")

                (= vēnit ut amīcōs vidēret [purpose clause]
                or vēnit amīcōs vīsum [supine: see Vergil's Verb Tips: The Supine])

Ablative: narrābat fābulam dē videndō amīcōs   he told a story about seeing his friends.
                narrbat fābulam dē amīcīs videndīs   (lit., "about friends to be seen")