Verbals and Verbal Phrases

A verbal is a word that is formed from a verb but is used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. There are three kinds of verbals: the participle, the gerund, and the infinitive. A verbal that has modifiers or complements is called a verbal phrase. Below are some examples of verbal phrases.

**PARTICIPIAL PHRASE** The language spoken by the greatest number of people is Mandarin. [The past participle spoken begins a phrase that modifies the noun language.]

**GERUND PHRASE** For some people, learning a foreign language can be a challenge. [The gerund learning begins a phrase used as the subject of the verb can be.]

**INFINITIVE PHRASE** I am learning to speak Japanese. [The infinitive to speak begins a phrase used as the direct object of the verb am learning.]

**EXERCISE A** Underline the verbal or verbal phrase in each of the following sentences. Above each verbal or verbal phrase, write gerund, gerund phrase, participle, participial phrase, infinitive, or infinitive phrase.

**Example 1.** Kevin researched different methods of measuring time.

1. The plan accepted by the mayor involved a tax cut.  
2. Paula expected the paper airplane to fly.  
3. Feeling dizzy, Helena stopped and took a break.  
4. The weight of the sack made it difficult to carry.  
5. My uncle from Michigan enjoys canoeing.  
6. The squeaking wheel alerted the mechanic to a potential problem.  
7. Getting up early in the morning is sometimes a challenge.  
8. We bought a new wrench to fix the leaky faucet.  
9. The forgotten treasure lay at the bottom of the sea for three hundred years.  
10. Fascinated, Pepe stood and admired the mural for several hours.

**EXERCISE B** Decide how the underlined word groups are used in each of the following sentences. Options for each sentence are given in parentheses. Circle the correct option.
Example 1. Coughing and sneezing, Doug stayed home from band practice. (adjective or noun)

11. The easiest part of the project is cutting out the pattern. (direct object or predicate nominative)
12. The tools used by some ancient cultures are impressive. (adverb or adjective)
13. Running five miles per week is Joanna’s goal. (subject or direct object)
14. They went to the park to have a picnic. (adverb or adjective)
15. The coach’s philosophy is to practice every day. (predicate nominative or direct object)