Gerunds

Consider the following sentence: I enjoy cycling and swimming. Can you find two examples of the gerund? They are ‘cycling’ and ‘swimming’. To create a gerund, we use the base of the verb with –ing attached to it.

read + ing = reading
write + ing = writing

Gerunds have at least 4 jobs. In the first place, they can be used after a verb instead of a noun. Examples are below.

a) I enjoy reading in bed.
b) I avoid eating too late at night.
c) I miss seeing my family when I am overseas.

For their second job, gerunds can be used after prepositions. Examples are below.

a) How long have you been interested in collecting stamps?
b) Thank you for coming. It was nice to see you.
c) People learn to speak by speaking.

For their third job, gerunds can be used as subjects in sentences. Examples are given below.

a) Speaking at public meetings can be a difficult thing to do.
b) Running a business can be difficult, too.
c) Kissing in public is considered impolite in some cultures.

For their fourth job, gerunds can be used when we make lists. An example is given below.

a) The following techniques are helpful when you read:
   a. predicting
   b. skimming
   c. scanning

In the following sentences, decide which of the choices is likely to be more appropriate:

1. I want [to enrol/enrolling] in a chemistry degree.
2. She hates [work/working] in the evenings.
3. [Ski/skiing] is a popular winter sport in many countries.
4. I was impressed by his [work/working].
5. Ross was fed up with [to study/studying].
7. The waiter recommended that we [try/trying] the fish.

Activity: Now try to think of four different sentences (one of each type) that include an example of the gerund.