



BY, IN, ON + -ING

By + -ing the -ing clause indicates the method or means used to do something or achieve a result.

used for saying that a particular method is used to achieve something.

- ◆ By working hard, she passed her maths exam.
- ◆ They only survived by eating roots and berries in the forest.
- ◆ By using the Internet you can do your shopping from home.

In + -ing the -ing clause indicates “consequence/cause”.

used for saying that as a result of doing one thing, you also do something else or cause something else to happen.

- ◆ In criticising the painting, I knew I would offend her.
- ◆ In choosing Marco, the people’s party has moved to the left.
- ◆ In trying to solve one problem, I created another.

On + -ing the -ing clause indicates “when”.

- ◆ On returning from Beijing, he wrote to the Chinese embassy.
- ◆ John was the first person I saw on leaving the hospital.
- ◆ On arriving at the hotel, he went to get changed.

By + -ing / In + -ing

Although we can often use **by + -ing** or **in + -ing** with a similar meaning, **by + -ing** is preferred in informal contexts.

- ◆ In writing about Spanish culture, I came to understand the country better.
(= the consequence of writing was to understand...)
- ◆ By writing about Spanish culture, I came to understand the country better.
(= the method I used to understand the Spanish culture better was to write.)

BUT COMPARE

- ◆ By telephoning every hour, she managed to speak to the doctor.

NOT In telephoning every hour, she managed ...

The method is the focus here, not the consequence.