

ellipsis after auxiliaries

avoidance of repetition We often use just the first part of a verb phrase, instead of repeating words which have already been said or written, or which can be understood from the context.

They have promised to compensate the villagers, and we believe that they will.

(more natural than ... *that they will compensate the villagers.*)

'Is she happy?' 'I think she is [happy].'

ellipsis first Normally words are dropped **after** they have been used once, but it can happen the other way round if a sentence starts with a conjunction.

*When you **can** [send us a postcard], please send us a postcard.*

*If I **may** [explain something to you], I'd like to explain something to you.*

do in place of auxiliary When there is no auxiliary, *do* is used in ellipsis.

*Does the dog eat cornflakes? He certainly **does** [eat cornflakes].*

*They wanted me to tell them the truth, so I **did** [tell them the truth] in the end.*

1 Make these sentences and exchanges more natural by cutting out unnecessary expressions after auxiliaries.

- ▶ 'Have you got their address?' 'I'm sure I have got their address.'
- 1 'Get up.' 'I am getting up.'
- 2 I didn't talk to him yesterday, but I did talk to him today.
- 3 'If I hadn't been there, you'd have been in trouble.' 'You're right, I would have been in trouble.'
- 4 They think I don't care, but I do care.
- 5 'The bedroom needs painting.' 'It certainly does need painting.'
- 6 If you can have a word with Phil, please have a word with Phil.
- 7 'The car's running badly.' 'Yes, it is running badly.'
- 8 Lucy doesn't go out much, and Sue doesn't go out much either.

2 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT. Read the text. What words have been dropped or replaced?

Nobody wants to quarrel less than I do

'I came round because I really think the whole thing is too absurd.'

'So do I. I always did (▶).'

'You can't have (1) half as much as I did (2). I mean really, when one comes to think of it. And after all these years.'

'Oh, I know, And I dare say if you hadn't (3), I should have (4) myself. I'm sure the last thing I want is to go on like this. Because, really, it's too absurd.'

'And if there's one thing I'm not, it's ready to take offence. I never have been (5), and I never shall be (6).'

'Very well, dear. Nobody wants to quarrel less than I do (7).'

'When a thing is over, let it be over, is what I always say. I don't want to say any more about anything at all. The only thing I must say is that when you say I said that everybody said that about your spoiling that child, it simply isn't what I said. That's all. And I don't want to say another thing about it.'

'Well, certainly I don't (8). There's only one thing I simply can't help saying ...'

(Adapted from a piece by E M Delafield)

▶ think the whole thing was too absurd.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

do so The slightly formal expression **do so** can replace a repeated verb phrase.

*The government has agreed to raise the retirement pension, and will **do so** as soon as the financial situation has improved.*

*I need to speak to Anna. I'll try to **do so** tomorrow.*

*He promised to paint the staircase, but he hasn't **done so**.*

We don't normally use **do so** if we are not talking about deliberate actions by the same person.

*I love the saxophone, and I always **have**.* (NOT ... *I have always **done so***. Not a deliberate action.)

*Angela's taken her pilot's licence, and I'd like to **do that** too.* (NOT ... *and I'd like to **do so***. Not the same person.)

3 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT. Put the letters of the boxed expressions into the right texts.

A did so B done so C has already done so D shall do so again E will do so

1 The employers of both parents are expected to contribute to childcare. Ask your employer for information on the child care scheme. If the employer does not contribute to the costs, the government ...

(Government publication)

2 In case none of your friends or family ..., let me be the first to wish you a very happy new year! Now before you ask whether the spring sunshine has gone to my head, I must tell you that I am referring to the tax year which began on April 6th.

(British MP)

3 I ALWAYS WRITE to my sister on Ada's birthday. I ... last year; and what was very remarkable, my letter reached her on her wedding day, and her letter reached me at Ravenna on my birthday.

(Article in Literary Gazette, November 1824)

4 I remain confident in the future of South Africa, provided we continue to adhere to the great constitutional compromise that we initiated 20 years ago. South Africans have a special ability to overcome problems. We astounded the world in 1990 and in 1994, and With all its faults and challenges, the South Africa of 2010 is a far better place than the South Africa of 1990.

(F W de Klerk, Sunday Times February 13 2010)

5 I always eat peas with honey I've ... all my life. They do taste kind of funny But it keeps them on the knife.

(anonymous)

NOTES

might do etc In British English, *do* can be used after another auxiliary.

'Are you going to Helen's party?' 'We **might do**.' (OR 'We **might**.)

'Close the door.' 'I **have (done)**.' (OR 'I **have**.)

could be, might have etc We don't always drop *be* or *have* after a modal.

'Could they **be** talking about us?' 'I suppose they **could (be)**.'

Do you think she **might have** forgotten? 'Yes, she **might (have)**.'

And we can't normally drop *be* or *have* if the modal is used for the first time.

'Are they French?' 'They **may be**.' (NOT 'They **may**.)

I'm not sure if she **has forgotten**, but she **might have**. (NOT ... *she might*.)

ellipsis with infinitives

to for whole infinitive We often use **to** instead of repeating a whole infinitive phrase.

'We can't guarantee that we'll make a profit, but we expect **to** [make a profit].'

'Are you and Gillian getting married?' 'We hope **to** [get married].'

'Let's go for a walk this afternoon.' 'I don't want **to** [go for a walk this afternoon].'

'Sorry I shouted at you. I didn't mean **to** [shout at you].'

Be and have are not usually dropped after **to**.

There aren't so many butterflies as there used **to be**. (NOT ... *as there used to*.)

I haven't got all the papers that I expected **to have**. (NOT ... *that I expected to*.)

1 Complete the sentences with verbs from the boxes, followed by **to**.

afford hope intend mean need seems used was going

- 1 We'd like to get a new car, but we can't
- 2 I don't play much football now, but I when I was at school.
- 3 I'm sorry I woke you up – I didn't
- 4 'Why didn't you phone?' 'Sorry. I, but I ran out of time.'
- 5 'Are you seeing Peter tomorrow?' 'No, I don't We've already talked things over.'
- 6 'Does Emma like her new job?' 'She
- 7 'Don't lend him any money, will you?' 'I don't
- 8 We're not making a profit, but we soon.

dropping to *To* is used like this particularly after **verbs that don't usually stand alone**, but need to be followed by an infinitive (as in the above examples). In other cases, we may drop *to* as well as the infinitive.

'Did you get the eggs?' 'Sorry, I forgot / I forgot **to**.' (Forget often stands alone)

'See if you can cheer Maggie up.' 'I'll try / I'll try **to**.' (Try often stands alone.)

He'll never leave home. He hasn't got the courage / the courage **to**. (after a noun)

I'm not going to do the exam. I'm not ready / not ready **to**. (after an adjective)

And note the common use of *like* without *to* after a conjunction.

Use my car **if you like**. Pay **when you like**. Park **where you like**.

2 Put in **to** if it is necessary, (**to**) if it is optional, and – (nothing) if it is impossible.

- ▶ I don't know if I can get here tomorrow, but I hope ^{to}.....
 - ▶ It would be good if you could cheer Helen up. Please try ^(to).....
 - ▶ Stay the night if you like –.....
- 1 'Are you coming swimming?' 'No, I don't want
 - 2 'Would you like to be on TV?' 'No, I'd hate
 - 3 He doesn't work. He's got so much money he doesn't need
 - 4 You were going to buy something for supper. Did you remember
 - 5 Come round when you like
 - 6 She could get into the national team. She's got the talent
 - 7 I'm not going to say anything to her. I'm afraid
 - 8 I may pass the exam, but I don't really expect

We can use *so* instead of repeating words in a *that*-clause. This happens after *believe, hope, expect, imagine, suppose, guess, reckon, think, be afraid*.

'Are you ready?' 'I think *so*.' (= 'I think that I'm ready.') 'Shall we go to the party?' 'I suppose *so*.'

negative structures We can make these structures negative in two ways.

'Will it rain?' 'I **don't** expect *so*.' OR 'I expect **not**.'

'We won't have enough money for a holiday.' 'I **don't** suppose *so*.' OR 'I suppose **not**.'

Hope and **be afraid** are normally used with **not**. **Think** is more common with **don't ... so**.

I may have to work this weekend. I **hope not**. (NOT ~~I don't hope so.~~) 'Is the bank open?' 'I'm afraid **not**.'

'Have you got a cold?' 'I **don't** think *so*.' (more natural than *I think not*.)

1 Add affirmative (+) or negative (-) answers.

- ▶ 'Is she French?' (*think* +) ... I think *so*.....
- ▶ 'Can we get tickets?' (*expect* -) ... I don't expect *so*..... OR ... I expect **not**.....
- 1 'Has she got flu?' (*afraid* +)
- 2 'Do we need to go shopping?' (*think* -)
- 3 'It doesn't matter, does it?' (*suppose* -)
- 4 'Do you think you'll get the job?' (*hope* +)
- 5 'Is the building finished?' (*believe* +)
- 6 'Are we working tomorrow?' (*hope* -)
- 7 'Did Joe pass the driving test?' (*afraid* -)

after say and tell We can use *so* after *say* and *tell* to avoid repeating information. We use this structure mostly to justify statements – to say why they should be believed. Compare:

'Julie's crazy.' 'Who **says so**?' 'Dr Cameron.' 'You're crazy.' 'Who **said that**?' 'I did.'

so I hear etc We can use *so* at the beginning of a clause with *say, see, hear, understand, tell, believe* and a number of other verbs. A present tense is common.

It's going to be a cold winter, or **so** the newspaper **says**.

2 Put in expressions from the box.

says so says so? So I hear – that's terrible So I see So I understand so it said on the news told me so

- 1 'I've just had my hair done.' '.....'
- 2 'You've got to clean the car.' 'Who?' 'I do.'
- 3 Sue's getting married. Sarah.....
- 4 There's going to be a rail strike, or.....
- 5 'Pete's getting married again.' '..... from his brother.'
- 6 'The school's closing.' '.....'
- 7 She's going to lose the election. Everybody

NOTES

We often use *so* and *not* after *if*.

Granny may come. **If so**, we'll play poker. He may be upstairs. **If not**, try next door.

We don't use *so* before a *that*-clause or after *know*.

I suppose that we'll have to go. (NOT ~~I suppose so, that we'll have to go.~~)

'It's getting late.' 'I know.' (NOT ~~I know so.~~)

ellipsis after *and*, *but* and *or*

We often leave out repeated words or phrases after *and*, *but* and *or*.

*a knife and [a] fork. She was poor but [she was] honest.
You can come with us or [you can] stay at home.*

leaving out the first of the two When two verbs, objects etc are the same, it is not always the second that is left out. We may leave out the first for clarity or simplicity.

*Cats [catch mice] and dogs catch mice. (NOT ~~Cats catch mice and dogs.~~)
I can [go] and will go.*

normal word order In informal speech and writing, ellipsis does not usually interrupt the normal word order of a clause. This may happen, however, in a more formal style.

*Peter planned, and Jane paid for, the holiday. (Less formal: Peter planned the holiday and Jane paid for it.)
Kevin likes dancing and Annie athletics. (Less formal: Kevin likes dancing and Annie likes athletics.)*

1 Write these sentences with less formal constructions. (Different answers are possible.)

1 I drove immediately, and Alistair somewhat later, to the Ministry.

.....

2 Jane went to Greece and Alice to Rome.

.....

3 You seem to be, and she certainly is, ill.

.....

4 I have not studied, nor do I intend to study, ancient Greek astronomy.

.....

5 The children will carry the small, and the adults the large, boxes.

.....

2 Put in *and*, *but* or *or* with one of the verbs from the box.

broke explained knew started stopped thought wanted wanted

1 At the head of the valley we reached a tiny settlement
to ask the way.

5 'I know that voice,
..... it years ago,' she said.

2 Antonietta sat beside her on the settee that a
doctor would be along soon.

6 Enid felt she did not have the concentration
for advanced driving or painting
..... she could probably try gardening.

3 Then she got really mad
.....
screaming back at me.

7 They couldn't get in and find the dead
woman until they got another key
..... the door down.

4 He didn't like her much
..... her to stay.

8 He was very happy with us
..... to see if the grass was
greener elsewhere.

Note: other conjunctions Ellipsis is not normally possible after other conjunctions.

She didn't know where she was when she woke up. (NOT ... when woke up.)

But subject pronouns and forms of *be* can be left out in certain cases (e.g. *if possible, when arriving, though intelligent*).

In informal speech (and very informal writing) we often **drop unstressed beginnings** of sentences.

This happens mainly with **articles, possessives, personal pronouns, auxiliary verbs** and **be, demonstratives** and introductory **there is**.

Coffee machine's broken. (= 'The coffee machine ...')

Wife's not well. (= 'My wife ...') *Need a loan?* *Can't read this email? Click ...*

1 Rewrite the sentences with the words that have been left out.

are I is it my she's ✓ that'll there's

- ▶ Lost her keys again. *She's lost her keys again.*
- 1 You looking for somebody?
- 2 Be £55.
- 3 The boss in?
- 4 Must go.
- 5 No milk left.
- 6 Won't start.
- 7 Sock's got a hole in.

2 Which words can be left out in informal speech?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ▶ The bus is late again. | 4 Have you seen my coat anywhere? |
| 1 It won't be ready in time. | 5 I couldn't understand a word she said. |
| 2 There's nothing to worry about. | 6 Be careful with that vase. |
| 3 You're all well, I hope? | |

We only drop pronouns **before stressed words**.

Need some help. Haven't heard. Can't play.

BUT NOT *Have heard* OR *Can play*. (Affirmative auxiliaries are usually unstressed.)

3 Correct (✓) or not (X)?

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 I'll see you soon. ... | 4 We're having problems again. ... |
| 2 Will see you soon. ... | 5 Are having problems again. ... |
| 3 See you 1. ... | 6 Having problems again. ... |

4 Read the conversation and note the examples of ellipsis. Circle some of them.

FRED: Morning, Ted. How're you doing?

TED: Hello, Fred. OK, I suppose. Can't complain. Not raining for once, at least. Damned bus is late again, though.

FRED: Yeah. See the match?

TED: Bit of it. Gave up at half-time and went to bed.

FRED: Don't blame you. Wasn't worth watching. And that ref. Needs a guide dog, if you ask me. What about this strike, then? Think they'll go ahead?

TED: Won't make any difference to me if they do. Couple of days off work wouldn't hurt. Family OK?

FRED: Yes. Brother's much better. Be out of hospital at the weekend if all goes well.

TED: Good news. Give him my best.

FRED: Will do. Here's my bus, then. See you around.