

VERBS - ELLIPTICAL CONSTRUCTIONS

Elliptical constructions are grammatically incomplete for the deliberate purpose of concise prose.

The term “elliptical” comes from “ellipsis” which indicates an omission, something left out. An elliptical construction delivers its meaning only if the context makes clear what the missing elements are. For example, the use of the word “that” is often omitted and sometimes even subjects and verbs are omitted. Here are some examples:

Example: *She decided that she would prefer to major in fine art.*
She decided she would prefer to major in fine art.

Notice that the clarity of the sentence above is not affected by removal of the word “that.” However, if you look at the sentence below, you can see that clarity would definitely be affected.

Example: *He knew that her love was true.*
He knew her love was true.

The clarity of the second sentence is compromised when “that” is omitted because a reader could read “He knew her” or “He knew her love” and then on seeing the verb “was,” would have to go back to the beginning to reread to get the correct meaning.

Here are some other examples of when elliptical constructions occur.

Example: *After he takes a refresher course, he will be eligible for a raise.*
After a refresher course, he will be eligible for a raise.

Example: *Broiled fish tastes better than boiled fish tastes.*
Broiled fish tastes better than boiled fish.

Example: *I am hungry, and Betty is hungry too.*
I am hungry, and Betty is too.

Elliptical Expressions with “and” and “too”

Subject + Verb, and Subject + verb too,

Form	Example
Verb “be”	I’m hungry, and Betty is too.
Verb “have”	I have some money, and he does too.
Simple present	I like apples, and he does too.
Simple past	Maria had a cold, and her child did too.
Past continuous	James was sleeping, and we were too.
Future	The will work tomorrow, and we will too.
Present continuous	He is listening to music, and she is too.
Present perfect	He has smoked for 8 years, and she has too.
Past perfect	He had gone to that café for years, and she had too.

Now make some examples of your own about you and a classmate or friend.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

ELLIPTICAL EXPRESSIONS WITH “AND” AND “EITHER”

Subject + Verb, and Subject + Verb either

Form	Example
Verb “be”	I’m not late, and she isn’t either.
Verb “have”	I don’t type, and they don’t either.
Simple present	I don’t understand, and he doesn’t either.
Simple past	They didn’t leave late, and I didn’t either.
Future	I won’t go early, and they won’t either.
Past continuous	I wasn’t studying, and they weren’t either.
Present continuous	My brother isn’t working, and I’m not either.
Present perfect	I haven’t had any food for days, and she hasn’t either.
Past perfect	She had not studied the text, and he hadn’t either.

Now make some examples of your own about you and a classmate or friend.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

ELLIPTICAL EXPRESSIONS WITH "BUT"

Subject + Verb, but Subject + Verb

Form	Example
Verb "be"	I'm very busy, but he isn't.
Verb "have"	I have an application form, but they don't
Simple Present	She takes English lessons, but her son doesn't.
Simple Past	I wrote a letter yesterday, but my husband didn't.
Past Continuous	I was working, but he wasn't.
Future	I'll go to the party, but she won't
Present Continuous	He's attending class, but she isn't.
Present Perfect	He has read that book, but I haven't.
Past Perfect	The had left their house before the storm came, but she hadn't.

Now make some examples of your own about you and a classmate or a friend.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____