Spoken Grammar Worksheet: Ellipsis, Fronting and Tails

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NAME

DATE

Remember

Form	Example
Situational ellipsis: subject and auxiliary dropped	(Do you) Want a lift? (It) Sounds great. (I'll) See you later.
Heads: the topic first, then the sentence	That new café, have you tried it?
Tails: a comment or clarification at the end	He's a great cook, your brother. It was lovely, that film.
Vague language and softeners	sort of, kind of, or something, and stuff like that, a bit

Typical mistakes

× Learners often say	✓ Say instead
(In an essay) Sounds like a good idea, the new policy.	The new policy sounds like a good idea.
Want you a coffee?	Want a coffee? / Do you want a coffee?
Is nice, your flat.	It's nice, your flat. / Nice flat!

1. Rewrite

Write the full, written form of each spoken sentence.

1. Sounds good.

2. Want a hand?

3. Seen Tom lately?

4. Lovely day, isn't it?

5. That restaurant by the river, have you been?

6. She's really clever, your sister.

7. Told you so.

8. Bit cold in here.

2. Rewrite

Make each sentence more spoken by using ellipsis, a head or a tail.

1. Do you want some more tea?
2. I don't know.
3. Your neighbour's dog is very noisy.
4. Have you finished already?
5. It was a great party.
6. I'll see you tomorrow.
7. Is anybody sitting here?
8. The new manager seems nice.

3. Correct the mistakes

Each spoken sentence has one non-natural form. Write a natural version.

1. Want you some help?
2. Is very good, this book.
3. Have seen the film?
4. Sounds it good.
5. That shop, you know it it?
6. Was amazing, the concert.

Writing

Write a natural WhatsApp exchange (8 short messages) between two friends planning to meet. Use ellipsis, at least one head, one tail and some vague language.

Speaking

- Have a two-minute chat with your partner using only short spoken forms.
- Describe a film you saw recently using a tail: 'It was brilliant, that film.'
- How does spoken grammar work in your language? Do you drop words too?
- When is spoken grammar not appropriate in English?

Answer key

1. Rewrite: 1 That sounds good. · 2 Do you want a hand? · 3 Have you seen Tom lately? · 4 It's a lovely day, isn't it? · 5 Have you been to that restaurant by the river? · 6 Your sister is really clever. · 7 I told you so. · 8 It's a bit cold in here.

2. Rewrite: 1 More tea? / Want some more tea? · 2 Dunno. / Don't know. · 3 Very noisy, your neighbour's dog. / Your neighbour's dog, it's very noisy. · 4 Finished already? · 5 Great party, that. / It was a great party, that. · 6 See you tomorrow. · 7 Anyone sitting here? · 8 Seems nice, the new manager.

3. Correct the mistakes: 1 Want some help? / Do you want some help? · 2 It's very good, this book. · 3 Seen the film? / Have you seen the film? · 4 Sounds good. · 5 That shop, do you know it? · 6 It was amazing, the concert. / Amazing, the concert.

Writing, model answer: A: Free tonight? B: Should be. Why? A: That new Thai place near the station, been yet? B: Not yet. Any good? A: Supposed to be amazing. Bit pricey, but still. B: Sounds great. Seven-ish? A: Perfect. Book a table or something? B: On it. See you there!