

Lesson Plan:

Ellipsis and substitution in discourse

LEVEL	TIME	SKILLS	FOCUS
Advanced (C1-C2)	60-90 minutes	Grammar, writing	Omitting or substituting repeated material for cohesion and fluency

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand how ellipsis and substitution contribute to cohesion in spoken and written English
- Recognise and produce ellipsis in conversational and written contexts
- Use do so, one/ones, so, not, and auxiliary verbs as substitutes
- Avoid ambiguity when using ellipsis

TARGET LANGUAGE (EXAMPLES)

Ellipsis — omitting repeated material

- 'Are you coming?' 'I am.' (omit 'coming')
- 'She said she'd call, but she didn't.' (omit 'call')
- 'I can swim and so can he.' (omit 'swim')
- 'Can you help? I'll try to.' (omit 'help')

Substitution with do so

- 'She asked me to submit the report. I did so immediately.'
- 'We planned to reduce costs. We have done so successfully.'

One/ones as substitution

- 'Which laptop do you recommend?' 'The one on the left.'
- 'I need some good ideas.' 'I have a few ones.' (WRONG) → a few

So/not with reporting verbs

- 'Will it rain?' 'I think so.' / 'I hope not.'
- 'Is she coming?' 'I believe so.' / 'I'm afraid not.'

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up (10 min)

Task: Students read a dialogue full of ellipsis and reconstruct the full forms.

- 'Coming?' 'Might.' 'Sure?' 'Not really.' — expand each turn.

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: Four ellipsis/substitution types with examples from conversation and writing.

- Key: ellipsis requires that the omitted material is recoverable from context.
- Substitution replaces the item; ellipsis omits it entirely.
- Both are cohesion devices — they link sentences together smoothly.

3. Guided practice (10 min)

Task: Rewrite texts using ellipsis and substitution to reduce repetition.

- 'I was asked to call. I did call. When I called, no one answered.'
- → 'I was asked to call. I did. When I did so, no one answered.'

4. Writing task (25 min)

Task: Rewrite a clunky, repetitive paragraph using ellipsis and substitution.

- Write an original paragraph where you deliberately use varied substitution strategies.
- Peer review: is it cohesive? Is the omitted material recoverable?

5. Analysis task (5-10 min)

Task: Identify and label all instances of ellipsis/substitution in a transcript.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one:

1. Rewrite a paragraph containing repetitive language using ellipsis and substitution.
2. Write a short dialogue (10 lines) that makes natural use of ellipsis throughout.
3. Find 5 examples of ellipsis/substitution in a spoken transcript or informal text and explain each.