

## ELLIPSIS

= substitution by nothing; grammatical omission

- as with substitution, ellipsis may be nominal, verbal, or clausal

---

### Positional categories of ellipsis:

3 categories of ellipsis according to where the ellipsis occurs within a construction:

**INITIAL:** the initial elements are ellipsed:

*(I) hope he's there. (Of) course he's here. (The) fact is I don't know what to do. (I'm a) afraid he won't be there.*

*(Do you) want a drink? (Have you) got any money? (I'm) sorry I couldn't be there. (I'll) see you later.*

**MEDIAL:** medial elements are ellipsed: *John owns a Volvo and Tom (owns) a BMW.*

**FINAL:** the final elements are ellipsed:

*I'm happy if you are (happy). I know that we haven't yet set the record straight, but we will (set the record straight).*

---

**NOMINAL ELLIPSIS** = elliptical noun phrases;

- usually results from final ellipsis, ie heads and any postmodifiers tend to be ellipsed; omission of the head of a noun phrase:

*He had to admit that Sarah's drawings were as good as his own . Tomorrow's meeting will have to be our first or our last .*

**VERBAL ELLIPSIS:**

- the dominant type is final

- typically, the subject and operator (and perhaps other auxiliaries) remain, and the predication is ellipsed:

*I'm happy if you are . If I could have bought a ticket, I would have . Tom will be playing, but I don't think Martin will (be) .*

- another kind of verbal ellipsis omits everything except the lexical verb: *Has she been crying? - No, laughing.*

**CLAUSAL ELLIPSIS:**

- involves ellipsis of the whole clause or the whole clause except for an introductory word:

*We're bound to win the prize some day. Yes, but when ?*

*Somebody has hidden my notebook, but I don't know who / why / where .*

- a *to*-infinitive clause may be omitted if it functions as the complementation of a verb or adjective.

An elliptical *to*-infinitive clause may consist of just the introductory unstressed particle *to*:

*You can borrow my pen, if you want to . You will speak to who(m) ever I tell you to .*

*Somebody ought to help. Shall I ask Peter to ?*

- in the negative, *not* is placed before *to*: *She borrowed my pen, although I told her not to .*