

Auxiliary Verbs & Ellipsis: Conversational Responses

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: Avoiding repetition, Short answers, Echo questions, Agreement (So/Neither), and Substitution (So/Not)

In English conversation, we use **auxiliary verbs** (do, be, have, can, will) to avoid repeating the main verb or the whole sentence. This makes speech faster and more natural.

1. Agreement: So am I / Neither do I

We use these structures to say that we are the same as the speaker. You must use **inversion** (Auxiliary Verb + Subject).

- **Positive Agreement:** So + Auxiliary + Subject
 - A: "I **am** hungry." → B: "So **am** I."
 - A: "I **work** here." → B: "So **do** I." (Use *do/does* for present simple verbs)
 - A: "I **went** home." → B: "So **did** I." (Use *did* for past simple verbs)
- **Negative Agreement:** Neither / Nor + Auxiliary + Subject
 - A: "I **am not** hungry." → B: "Neither **am** I." (NOT: ~~Neither am not I~~)
 - A: "I **don't** like it." → B: "Neither **do** I." / "Nor **do** I."
- **Alternative Form:** Subject + Negative Auxiliary + either
 - A: "I **can't** swim." → B: "I **can't** either."

2. Showing Interest or Surprise (Echo Questions)

We can repeat the auxiliary verb as a question to show we are listening, interested, or surprised.

- **Structure:** Auxiliary + Pronoun?
 - A: "I **have** bought a new car." → B: "**Have** you? That's great!"
 - A: "She **doesn't** eat meat." → B: "**Doesn't** she? I didn't know that."
 - A: "They **lived** in Paris." → B: "**Did** they?" (Use *did* for past simple)

3. Substitution: I think so / I hope not

We use **so** and **not** instead of repeating a whole clause after verbs like *think*, *hope*, *expect*, *suppose*, and *believe*.

- **Positive:** "Is he coming?" → "I **think so**." (I think he is coming).
- **Negative:** "Is it broken?" → "I **hope not**." (I hope it is not broken).
 - *Exception:* With "think", we often use "I **don't think so**" rather than "I think not".

4. Disagreeing and Denying

To disagree, we simply use the opposite auxiliary to the first speaker.

- A: "You **are** late!" → B: "No, I **am not**!"
- A: "I **didn't** break it." → B: "Yes, you **did**!"

Practice

Instruction: Complete the dialogues below. Follow the instructions in brackets (e.g., *Agree, Disagree, Show Interest*) to determine the correct structure.

Part 1: Agreement (So / Neither)

Fill in the blanks to agree with Speaker A.

- A: I am really tired today.
B: So _____ I.
- A: I didn't watch the football match last night.
B: Neither _____ I.
- A: I've never been to Australia.
B: Nor _____ I.
- A: We love Italian food.
B: So _____ we.
- A: I can't drive a car.
B: Neither _____ my brother.
- A: I was very happy with the results.
B: So _____ I.

Part 2: Echo Questions (Showing Interest)

Respond to Speaker A with an Echo Question to show interest or surprise.

- A: Sarah speaks three languages.
B: _____ she? That's impressive!
- A: We moved to a new house last week.
B: _____ you? Where is it?
- A: I haven't finished my homework yet.
B: _____ you? You should hurry up!
- A: John will help us tomorrow.
B: _____ he? That's kind of him.

Part 3: Substitution & Mixed Responses

Complete the conversations using 'so', 'not', 'either', or the correct auxiliary verb.

- A: Is the meeting cancelled?
B: I hope _____ ! I prepared a long presentation.
- A: Do you think it will rain?
B: I think _____. Look at those dark clouds.
- A: You didn't lock the door!
B: Yes, I _____ ! I remember turning the key. (Disagreeing)
- A: I don't want to go to the party.
B: I don't _____. Let's stay home.
- A: You are making a mistake.
B: No, I _____. I know what I'm doing. (Disagreeing)

Answer Key

1. **am** (So **am** I)
2. **did** (Neither **did** I)
3. **have** (Nor **have** I)
4. **do** (So **do** we)
5. **can** (Neither **can** my brother)
6. **was** (So **was** I)
7. **Does** (Present Simple 'speaks' -> Does she?)
8. **Did** (Past Simple 'moved' -> Did you?)
9. **Haven't** (Negative Present Perfect -> Haven't you?)
10. **Will** (Future -> Will he?)
11. **not** (I hope **not**)
12. **so** (I think **so**)
13. **did** (Yes, I **did**)
14. **either** (I don't **either**)
15. **am not** (No, I **am not**)