

LANGL1861: Twelve Tips for Solving Missing Sentences Exercises

Based on and adapted from: <http://www.affairscloud.com/tips-and-tricks-for-parajumbled-sentences/>

1) PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Personal pronouns are he, she, it, him, her, they, you, your etc. Remember that personal pronouns always refer to a person, place or thing etc. Therefore, if a sentence contains a personal pronoun without mentioning the person, place or object it is referring to, the person, place or object must have come in the previous sentence. Often, this is a good lead to identify a link.

- **In context (*Africans go back to the land as plants reclaim the desert*):**

Meanwhile, **Kjeld Rasmussen** of the University of Copenhagen has been looking in details at sand **dunes** in the same area. (A) (4) Once, **they** seemed to be marching south. But since the 1980s, **he** says, there has been “a steady reduction in bare ground” with “vegetation cover, including bushes and trees, on the increase of the dunes.”

2) DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

The demonstrative pronouns are “this,” “that,” “these,” and “those”. “This” and “that” are used to refer to singular nouns or noun phrases and “these” and “those” are used to refer to plural nouns and noun phrases. Whenever a sentence contains a demonstrative pronoun without mentioning the noun or the noun phrase, it means that the previous sentence must be mentioning that noun or noun phrase. Finding that noun or noun phrase helps us connect two sentences.

- **In context (*Can Earthquakes be predicted?*):**

As we have seen, **the recurrence interval** – the time required to accumulate the strain that will be released by fault slipping in a future earthquake – **can be calculated*** from the rate of relative plate movement and the expected fault slip, as estimated from the displacements observed in past Earthquakes. Geologists **can also estimate**** the intervals between large earthquakes up to several thousand years in the past by finding and dating soil layers that were offset by fault displacements. (II)

(B) Although **these two methods** usually give similar results, the uncertainty of the predictions turns out to be large – as much as 100 percent of the recurrence interval.

* **method n°1**

****method n°2**

3) LOGIC AND STRUCTURE

Sometimes using logic to decide the order of sentences can be helpful. The content of some sentences means they must come before or after others in the text. You should also think about the purpose of the sentence in the paragraph: To introduce an idea, to give an example or explanation, to conclude, to link to the next paragraph, to reformulate, to simplify, etc.

- **In context (*Can Earthquakes be predicted?*):**

In Southern California, for example, the recurrence interval for the San Andreas **fault** is estimated to be **110 to 180 years**, but the observed intervals between individual earthquakes can be appreciably shorter or longer than this average value. One part of this fault experienced a large earthquake **in 1857**, whereas another part (**the southernmost**) appears to have remained locked since a large earthquake that occurred around 1680. (III)

(E) **In other words**, **when** and **where** earthquakes happen in one part of a **fault** system influences when and where they happen elsewhere in the system.

4) ABBREVIATIONS

Full form vs. short form: Here, we encounter full and short names, sometimes abbreviations of some term or institution. E.g. World Trade Organization – WTO; Dr. Manmohan Singh – Dr. Singh; President George W. Bush – President Bush or the President. The rule is that if both full form/title/position as well as short form is present in different sentences, then the sentence containing full form will come before the sentence containing short form.

- **In context (*Africans go back to the land as plants reclaim the desert*):**

Aerial photographs taken in June show “quite spectacular regeneration of vegetation”, in northern Burkina Faso, according to **Chris Reij of the Free University, Amsterdam**. (D)

(3) There are more trees for firewood and more grasslands for livestock. And a survey among farmers shows a 70% increase in yields of local cereals such as sorghum and millet in one province in recent years. The survey, which **Reij** is collating, was paid for by Dutch, German and American overseas aid agencies.

5) CHRONOLOGY

Either dates or time sequence indicating words: Be aware of the time indication either by giving years – or by using time indicating words. Arrange the sentences using their proper time sequence.

- **In context (*Who's to say the risk is worth taking?*):**

(...)There's another later stage at which it becomes obvious to everyone where it is leading, but it is far better to make decisions about research if you can tackle it at the earlier stage. To do that, it takes people who **have been in the game for a while**. (7)

(E) **I have been working on neuropeptides since 1975**, and when I look back over the years I can see how far we've moved forward, and how things might go.

6) HYPOTHESIS-EXAMPLE

If any sentence is working as an example to illustrate a theory or hypothesis, it must go after the idea that it explains.

- **In context (*The poor will pay for global warming*):**

Some economists argue that trying to be fair to poorer and **rapidly developing countries** may impede efforts to minimise climate change, as **these countries** are generally far less "carbon-efficient" than richer ones. (8)

(B) **For example**, **China** burns four times as much carbon as the US for every dollar of GDP, and eight times as much as the European Union.

7) ARTICLES

Articles can be divided into two categories:

1. Definite (the); **2.** Indefinite (*a* and *an*).

When the author uses 'a/an' – he wants to make a general statement – wants to introduce the noun followed by 'a/an' for the first time, but when he uses 'the' he wants to refer back to some previously discussed noun. It means having 'the' is very unlikely in the opening sentence. If 'a/an' and 'the' both are used for the same noun then the sentence containing 'the' will come after the sentence containing 'a/an'.

- **In context (*The Poor will pay for Global Warming*):**

Rich nations are also coming under pressure to reach agreement on activating **a long-promised though modest "adaptation fund"** to help poor and vulnerable nations prepare themselves for the effects of climate change. (7) (J) **The \$100 million fund** was set up nine years ago as part of the Kyoto agreement.

8) KEY WORDS

Some words will be repeated in two consecutive sentences. In most of the cases we repeat some important words of one sentence in the sentence that follows.

- **In context (*Can Earthquakes be predicted?*):**

...seismologists have shown how the chances of a potentially damaging earthquake tend to go up during periods of **increased seismic activity**. (V) (D) Interpreting this type of information can be tricky, however, because, even when **the seismic activity is high**, accurate predictions of large earthquakes are still not possible.

9) SYNONYMS

Some words, group of words or expressions that have the same meaning or that convey the same idea.

- **In context (*The poor will pay for global warming*):**

The report argues that people harmed by the effects of global warming have a right to compensation, that **human rights** should come before economics in deciding how to respond

to climate change, and that claims of continuing scientific uncertainty about the likely extent of climate change cannot justify postponing action. (6)

(D) “In law, wilful ignorance cannot be used as justification for continuing harmful behaviour, Brown says. Brown and his colleagues say that future agreements on global climate should take these principles into account. (...)

10) INDICATING OR CONTRASTING WORDS

Think about what is being indicated in sentences containing words that introduce contrasts such as but, so, therefore, however, although, though, yet... Often the sentence structure in those cases will alternate between positive and negative ideas.

- **In context (*Can Earthquakes be predicted?*):**

Almost a million people, prepared in advance by a public education campaign, evacuated their homes and factories in the hours before the quake (**positive idea +**). (IV) (H) **Although many towns and villages were destroyed and several hundred people were killed (negative idea -)**, it appears that many were saved (**positive idea +**).

11) CAUSE AND EFFECT

Look for words or phrases explicitly indicating that one thing causes another or logically determines another. For example, accordingly, in order to, because, so...that, consequently, therefore, given, thus, hence, when...then, if...then.

- **In context (*Can Earthquakes be predicted?*):**

Depending on the geometry of the fault system, these changes can either increase or decrease the likelihood of earthquakes on nearby fault segments. (VII) (J) **Therefore**, an earthquake can be expected there at any time – tomorrow, or decades from now.

12) YOUR OWN APPROACH TO THE TEXT: TAKE YOUR TIME!

It is important to have a cautious approach to all of those tips and to not let them fool you into building quick shortcuts. Always take your time to thoroughly analyse sentences, contexts and the structure of a text. Sometimes elements and words from those previous tips might actually contradict each other and lead you into a trap because you were too quick to establish a connection where in fact there wasn't any.

Example: seeing two key words being repeated and thus linking the two paragraphs where they appear together where in fact the contexts in which they were inserted had no connection whatsoever and cannot logically follow each other!