

## Learn how **That** can help you demystify a long sentence

In our first session of Verbal Live Prep – SC1 – How to Approach Sentence Correction – we saw that simplifying the sentence structure has a two-fold effect. Firstly, it helps clarify the (intended) meaning. Secondly, it helps you identify errors. We also saw that selecting the correct answer becomes much easier once you have a clear understanding of meaning and once you identify the errors in the original sentence. Click on the image to view the recording of the strategy session.

### Purpose

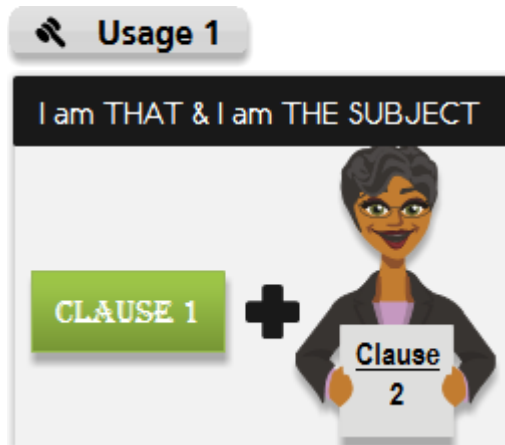
In this article, we will see how knowledge of the various uses of that can be leveraged to simplify the sentence structure. Do the **exercise questions** in the end to test your understanding.



When we simplify the sentence structure, we identify the clauses and we identify the SV pairs in each clause. Then we check for other logical linkages in the sentence - modifiers & modified entities, verb sequencing between multiple verbs, logical lists, and pronoun-antecedent pairs - and determine if errors exist. Using this analysis, we then evaluate the answer choices and confidently mark the correct choice.



As you know “THAT” is a very common clause marker. It is a multi-faceted word. In this article we will discuss its two primary uses. Note “that” may be used in other ways but these two uses constitute the most common uses of ‘that’.



Let's take an example:

Mary made claims that pertain to her achievements in high school.

In this sentence “that” refers to the preceding noun – claims - and the entire purple clause modifies the noun – claims.

As you can see, “that” is the subject of the purple clause. Its verb is “pertain”.

Let's take another example:

Retailers do not approve of the apps that allow shoppers to perform immediate price-comparison by scanning a product on the shelf.

In this sentence “that” refers to the preceding noun – apps - and the entire purple clause modifies

this noun – apps.

As you can see, “that” is the subject of the purple clause. Its verb is “allow”.

**“That” modifies the preceding noun through this modifying clause and acts as the subject of this clause.**



Let's take an example:

Mary claims that she won several awards in her high school.

In this sentence “that” connects two clauses.

Mary claims

Mary claims what?

Mary claims that she won several awards in her high school.

As you can see, “that” is simply a connector. It is not the subject of the purple clause. The subject of the purple clause is “she” and its verb is “won”.

Let's take another example:

The analysts strongly believe that the manufacturing sector will continue to act as a drag on gross domestic product in the third quarter and that the improvement is unlikely until regional structural issues are addressed and the broader global backdrop brightens.

In this sentence “that” connects clauses.

o Analysts strongly believe

o Analysts strongly believe what?

o Analysts strongly believe

♣ that manufacturing sector will continue to act as drag...

♣ that the improvement is unlikely until...

As you can see, “that” is simply a connector. It is not the subject of the purple or blue clause.

The subject of the purple clause is “manufacturing sector” and its verb is “will continue”. The subject of the blue clause is “improvement” and its verb is “is”.

Let's take one more example:

Mary found certain evidence that even the Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) could not find.

In this sentence “that” connects two clauses.

- o Mary found certain evidence

- o What kind of evidence

- o Evidence that even CSI could not find

As you can see, “that” is simply a connector. It is not the subject of the purple clause. The subject of the purple clause is “CSI” and its verb is “could not find”.

**“That” connects two clauses. It acts as a connector. Each clause connected by ‘that’ requires its own subject and verb pair.**

## HOW TO APPLY THIS KNOWLEDGE

Ok so now that you know that “that” can typically act in two capacities, one in which it is subject of the clause and another one in which it is simply a connector, how should you utilize this knowledge to simplify the clauses. It's simple:

1. When you come across the word “that”, you should know right away that there is another clause.
2. Then when you get to identifying the SV pairs of each clause, keep in mind that depending upon how “that” is used, it could act as subject and it could simply be a connector.

## APPLICATION ON OFFICIAL QUESTION I – OG13#140

Rock samples taken from the remains of an asteroid about twice the size of the 6-mile-wide asteroid that eradicated the dinosaurs has been dated to be 3.47 billion years old and thus is evidence of the earliest known asteroid impact on Earth.

We will now solve this question.

### MEANING ANALYSIS

This sentence is about certain rock samples that were taken from remains of an asteroid. Details about the size of this asteroid have been provided in the sentence. The main aim of this sentence is to specify the age of these rock samples and to make the claim that these rock samples are evidence of the oldest known asteroid impact on earth.

### SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Now we will simplify the sentence structure. We see that the subject of first clause is “rock samples”. The portion “taken from the remains of an asteroid” is a verb-ed modifier. “taken” cannot be a verb since it is not preceded by is/are/was/were. As we continue reading, we come across the word “that”, which signals presence of a clause. – that eradicated the dinosaurs. Then

we continue reading and we find what appear to be the two verbs of the subject “rock samples” in the beginning of the sentence.

- **Rock samples** taken from the remains of an asteroid about twice the size of the 6-mile-wide asteroid
- **that eradicated** the dinosaurs
- **has been dated** to be 3.47 billion years old and thus **is** evidence of the earliest known asteroid impact on Earth.

### ERROR ANALYSIS

Now that we have the simplified sentence structure, we can perform the error analysis. Notice how you can now focus on each clause one by one and figure out the grammatical correctness and errors. The SV pairs have been color coded. As you can see “that” in this sentence refers to the preceding noun – asteroid. It has its verb “eradicated”. We also clearly see the verbs for the plural subject – rock samples. These verbs are singular and hence there is SV number error here. So the correct choice should have plural verbs. This is the first and the primary error. The second error is the idiomatic usage of the phrase – dated to be. The correct idiom is ‘dated at’.

### ANSWER CHOICE ANALYSIS

Now we will review each answer choice one by one and find the correct answer:

A. has been dated to be 3.47 billion years old and thus is

=>**SV Number error, Idiom error as discussed**

B. has been dated at 3.47 billion years old and thus

=>**SV Number error, Verb does not exist. Per our sentence structure and meaning analysis, we know that there are two verbs for the subject – rock samples. In this choice, the verb “is” has been removed and hence second verb no longer exists.**

C. have been dated to be 3.47 billion years old and thus are

=>**Idiom error**

D. have been dated as being 3.47 billion years old and thus

=>**Idiom error. Second verb is missing as in choice B**

E. have been dated at 3.47 billion years old and thus are

=>**Correct choice.** Both verbs are plural. The idiom has been corrected.

## TAKE AWAY

This is a 700 level question. However, it was extremely simple to arrive at the correct answer once we simplified the sentence structure. We will see more of this in our SC2 – Sentence Structure session.

## **EXERCISE**

For the sentences below, do the following:

1. Identify all SV pairs in the sentence above.
2. Is there any problem with the sentence with regards to the SV pairs?
3. How will you correct the error?

### **QUESTION 1:**

In a review of 2,000 studies of human behavior that date back to the 1940s, two Swiss psychologists, declaring that since most of the studies had failed to control for such variables as social class and family size, none could be taken seriously.

### **QUESTION 2**

In 1713, Alexander Pope began his translation of the Iliad, a work that, taking him seven years until completion, and that literary critic Samuel Johnson, Pope's contemporary, pronounced the greatest translation in any language.

## **Bottom Line**

1. You can simplify the sentence into clauses if you follow the clause markers.
2. "That" has many functions. The two common functions are listed below:
  - a. Subject of the Clause
  - b. Connector

## **SC2- SENTENCE STRUCTURE**

In "SC1-How to approach Sentence Correction", we discussed the three pillars of Sentence Correction – Meaning, Sentence Structure and Grammar. Furthermore, we demonstrated how one can answer identify errors and spot the correct answer through "intended meaning". In the next session – "SC2- Sentence Structure" we will discuss how you can leverage "sentence structure" to

1. Identify the intended meaning
2. Identify majority of the errors.

In our experience, you can solve over 95% of the SC questions through the methods described above. To get the most of this session, make sure that you have reviewed this article thoroughly and analyzed the two exercise sentences above. Here is a sample analysis of the first question.

*Rock samples taken from the remains of an asteroid about twice the size of the 6-mile-wide asteroid that eradicated the dinosaurs has been dated to be 3.47 billion years old and thus is evidence of the earliest known asteroid impact on Earth.*

"We see that the subject of first clause is "rock samples". The portion "taken from the remains of

an asteroid” is a verb-ed modifier. “taken” cannot be a verb since it is not preceded by is/are/was/were. As we continue reading, we come across the word “that”, which signals presence of a clause. – that eradicated the dinosaurs. Then we continue reading and we find what appear to be the two verbs of the subject “rock samples” in the beginning of the sentence. “