MAIN CLAUSES & SENTENCE STRUCTURE

CEFR Level C2 — Mastery

English Language Worksheets | 4 Worksheets + Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Syntax as a Rhetorical Instrument

At C2, sentence architecture governs pace, emphasis and moral positioning.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Rhetorical uses of sentence structure

Device	Effect	Example
periodic suspension	Main clause withheld; tension accumulates	“When the accounts were opened, when the names were read, he stood.”
asyndeton	Coordinators omitted; speed, urgency	“They came, they took, they left.”
polysyndeton	Coordinators repeated; weight, relentlessness	“and the rain and the wind and the dark”
anaphora + parallelism	Repeated openings; incantatory force	“We shall fight … we shall fight …”
antithesis / chiasmus	Balanced clauses; epigrammatic closure	“Ask not what your country can do for you …”
syntactic anticlimax	Long build, deflating short clause	“After years of litigation, of appeals, of ruin — he shrugged.”
fragment as emphasis	Deliberate incompleteness lands a blow	“No apology. No explanation. Nothing.”

PART A — **Identify the device**

Name the device in each sentence and explain its rhetorical effect in context.

1. “The inquiry heard the evidence, weighed the testimony, examined the accounts — and changed nothing.”
Context: a newspaper leader

Device: _____ Effect: _____

2. “They promised transparency. They promised reform. They promised, above all, that this would never happen again.”
Context: a campaign speech

Device: _____ Effect: _____

3. “When the last mill closed, and the last train left, and the young had gone, the town began, at last, to be honest with itself.”
Context: a literary essay

Device: _____ Effect: _____

4. “Twenty years of service. One anonymous complaint. Dismissed.”
Context: a memoir

Device: _____ Effect: _____

PART B — **Transform for effect**

Rewrite each sentence using the device indicated. The effect must be deliberate.

1 Original: “After a long trial and much expense, the verdict was unremarkable.”
Device: syntactic anticlimax
→ _____

2 Original: “The government failed to consult, to explain, and to apologise.”
Device: asyndeton
→ _____

3 Original: “He finally spoke once the room emptied and the cameras were switched off.”
Device: periodic suspension
→ _____

Score: _____ / 14

Worksheet 2: Precision — Information Structure

Mastery means controlling what the reader notices, and when.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Study the distinctions**

Contrast	Distinction
theme vs rheme	theme = what the clause is about (start); rheme = the new information (end)
end-focus vs end-weight	focus = new info last; weight = heavy constituent last (usually aligned)
it-cleft vs wh-cleft	it-cleft isolates one constituent; wh-cleft fronts a whole proposition
fronting vs inversion	fronting moves an element; only some fronted elements trigger inversion
passive for cohesion vs evasion	passive is legitimate when it preserves theme continuity

Precision cloze: complete each sentence with the ONE structure whose information flow fits the context exactly.

1. The panel published its findings on Monday. _____ nobody had anticipated was the dissent of its chair.
2. _____ was not the cost that defeated the bill, but the timing.
3. _____ in the archive lay the letter that would settle the question.
4. The witness had lied before. Never _____ she lied so brazenly.
5. _____ appears that the two accounts cannot both be true.
6. The minister resigned. _____ followed was three weeks of silence.
7. So dense _____ the report that few read past the summary.
8. _____ remain grounds for scepticism that the review does not address.

PART B — **Repair the information flow**

Each sentence is grammatical but badly structured (violating end-weight, end-focus, or theme continuity). Explain the fault, then rewrite it.

1. “That the auditors had been dismissed by the board three weeks before the collapse was known.”
   Fault: _____
   Rewrite: _____
2. “A man carrying a briefcase and wearing a grey overcoat which was soaked through entered.”
   Fault: _____
   Rewrite: _____
3. “The report was written by the committee. The minister was criticised by the report. Resignation was demanded by the opposition.”
   Fault: _____
   Rewrite: _____

Score: _____ / 14

Worksheet 3: Style Analysis & Rewriting

How syntax carries argument, cadence and concealed judgement.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Analytical reading**

> *It was not the fire that destroyed the archive; it was the filing system. For sixty years the papers had been catalogued, cross-referenced, indexed, and duplicated — and stored, every last one of them, in a single basement. What the trustees had never been asked was whether redundancy might be worth its cost. Rarely does an institution rehearse its own destruction. When the water rose, when the pumps failed, when the volunteers arrived with buckets and, later, with nothing, four centuries of correspondence became, in eleven hours, a slurry. The report into the loss runs to two hundred pages. It recommends a review.*

1. Identify FIVE structures and classify each.

_____

_____

_____

2. Analyse the opening it-cleft. Why is ‘the filing system’ placed where it is?

_____

_____

3. ‘When the water rose, when the pumps failed, when the volunteers arrived …’ — name and analyse this construction.

_____

_____

4. The last two sentences are short and flat. What judgement do they deliver, and how?

_____

_____

PART B — **Neutralise the style**

Rewrite the passage's content as three neutral sentences of institutional reporting, stripping every rhetorical structure. Then note in one sentence what is lost.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is lost: _____

Score: _____ / 16

Worksheet 4: Extended Writing — The Architecture of the Sentence

Deploy the full structural repertoire with deliberate, controlled effect.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A **The task**

Write a persuasive, investigative or literary passage (200–250 words) on a subject of your choosing. Requirements: at least SIX distinct structural devices, of which at least ONE periodic sentence and ONE deliberate fragment or anticlimax; a consistent register. Underline each target structure.

Self-check before submitting	✓
Six or more distinct structural devices, each underlined	
At least one periodic sentence (main clause withheld)	
At least one deliberate fragment or syntactic anticlimax	
End-focus respected: new information falls at the end	
No unintentional comma splices or run-ons	
Sentence lengths varied for pace, not by accident	

Word count: _____ Structures underlined: _____ / 6

Score: _____ / 35

ANSWER KEY & TEACHER NOTES

For teacher use only — C2 Level Worksheets

Main Clauses & Sentence Structure | English Language Worksheets

Worksheet 1 – Rhetorical Devices

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
A1	'heard … weighed … examined — and changed nothing'	**Syntactic anticlimax (with tricolon) — the accumulating verbs raise expectation; the short final clause deflates it, indicting the inquiry**
A2	'They promised … They promised …'	**Anaphora with parallelism — repetition builds incantatory force; the extended third limb exposes the promise as hollow**
A3	'When the last mill closed, and … and …'	**Periodic suspension with polysyndeton — the repeated 'and' weights the losses; the main clause, delayed, lands as bitter resolution**
A4	'Twenty years of service. One complaint. Dismissed.'	**Fragments as emphasis — the asyndetic fragments enact the brutality of the process; the passive participle alone delivers the verdict**
B1	anticlimax	**e.g. 'After a trial that lasted three years, after ruinous expense, after the ruin of two reputations — the verdict was unremarkable.'**
B2	asyndeton	**e.g. 'The government failed to consult, failed to explain, failed to apologise.'**
B3	periodic suspension	**e.g. 'Once the room had emptied, once the cameras were switched off, he finally spoke.'**

Worksheet 2 – Precision & Information Flow

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
A	Gaps 1–8 in order	**1 What, 2 It, 3 Deep (also 'There'), 4 had, 5 It, 6 What, 7 was, 8 There**
B1	end-weight violation	**Fault: a very heavy subject clause precedes a two-word predicate. Rewrite: 'It was known that the board had dismissed the auditors three weeks before the collapse.'**
B2	end-focus / heavy modifier before the verb	**Fault: the long postmodified subject buries the verb 'entered'. Rewrite: 'A man entered, carrying a briefcase and wearing a grey overcoat soaked through.'**
B3	passive chain breaks theme continuity	**Fault: three agentless passives with shifting themes; the reader loses the actor. Rewrite: 'The committee wrote the report. It criticised the minister, and the opposition demanded her resignation.'**

Worksheet 3 – Style Analysis

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q1	Five structures + types	**'It was not the fire …; it was the filing system' (paired it-clefts, antithesis); 'catalogued, cross-referenced, indexed, and duplicated' (tricolon/accumulation); 'What the trustees had never been asked was …' (wh-cleft, agentless passive); 'Rarely does an institution rehearse …' (inversion); 'When …, when …, when …' (periodic suspension, anaphora); 'It recommends a review.' (syntactic anticlimax)**

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q2	the opening it-cleft	**The cleft isolates and contrasts two candidate causes; 'the filing system' occupies the position of end-focus, arriving as the unexpected new information and converting an accident into an indictment of administration**
Q3	'When …, when …, when …'	**Periodic suspension with anaphora: three subordinate clauses delay the main clause, enacting the slow hours of the flood; the payload ('became … a slurry') lands with maximum weight, its end-focus falling on the single degrading noun**
Q4	the flat closing sentences	**The bathetic contrast between 'two hundred pages' and 'a review' delivers the verdict through structure alone: brevity and anticlimax imply that the institution has learned nothing, without the writer saying so**
B	Neutral rewrite	**e.g. 'Water damaged the archive over eleven hours. The papers had been stored in one basement. A two-hundred-page report recommends a review.' Lost: causation, irony, cadence and the concealed accusation of negligence**

Worksheet 4 – Extended Writing Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Structural range	Six or more distinct devices, deliberately deployed and underlined	0–8
Advanced structures	Periodic sentence + fragment/anticlimax, both effective	0–8
Register & pace	Register sustained; sentence length varied for deliberate effect	0–7
Accuracy	Information structure, punctuation and inversion all error-free	0–6
Effect	The passage genuinely persuades or moves; syntax earns its place	0–6