

## SECTION I

### Tenses in reported speech

#### 1 TENSES OF THE REPORT VERB

Because we usually report what was said in the past, we normally use a Past tense for the report verb:

*Last night in a television address, the President **claimed** he'd done nothing wrong.*

- We use a future form to guess the future:  
*I'm sure he'll say he's too tired.*  
*What do you think the judge's decision is going to be?*
- We often use Past Continuous to report gossip, or to repeat what somebody else has just said:  
*Nikos **was saying** you're thinking of leaving.*
- We may use a report verb in a Present tense if we feel the original statement is still relevant:  
*John **says** he's on his way and will be here in twenty minutes.* (= reporting a phone message)

#### 2 REPORTING PAST TENSES

When reporting a statement or question that referred to the past, we commonly use Past Perfect:

*He told me he'd **been working** all day.* (= original: 'I've **been working** all day.')

- Where the time relationship is obvious, we can report past events with Past Simple rather than Past Perfect:  
*The palaeontologist **claimed** the world **had begun** / **began** earlier than originally thought.*
- Sometimes, we keep the original tenses, especially if the report verb is Present tense. :  
*Oh, by the way, Tony **says** he's **going to be** a bit late.*  
*He told me he's **been working** all day.* (= reported the same day)

#### 3 REPORTING PRESENT TENSES

We may use Past tenses to report Present tenses if they refer to things that are no longer relevant:

*Jo said she **felt** sick.* (= she isn't any longer)

- But, we can use Present tenses if the statement is still thought to be relevant:  
*Jo said she **is feeling** sick.* (= she still is)
- There can sometimes be a conflict between logical truth and grammatical habit when reporting situations that are still true at the time of reporting. If somebody asks your age, it is logical to report it (a short time later) as:  
*He asked me how old I **am**.*

- However, there is a strong grammatical tendency to keep the tenses in a sentence in agreement:  
*He asked me how old I **was**.* (and you are still the same age)
- Both are acceptable and there's no difference in meaning:  
*They asked me where you **live** / **lived**.*  
*She told me she **hadn't** / **hasn't** got much money.*
- If we don't believe the speaker, we use a Past tense:  
*He **claimed** the Earth **was** flat.*  
*He told me he **was** broke but I know he **was** lying.*

#### 4 REPORTING MODAL VERBS

For many modal verbs (see Units 3 and 4) there is no difference between direct and reported speech:

'I **might go** but I don't want to.' becomes:

*He said he **might go** but he **didn't** want to.*

'You **shouldn't have** eaten so much.' becomes:

*My wife said I **shouldn't have** eaten so much.*

- Those that can change (if necessary) are:

Modal	Changes	Examples
<i>can</i>	becomes: <i>could</i> (or <i>would be able to</i> )	' <i>Can I borrow your ball?</i> ' becomes: <i>He asked if he <b>could</b> borrow our ball.</i>
<i>must</i>	becomes: <i>had to</i> or <i>was / were to</i> (to express obligation)	' <i>You <b>must</b> go back again later.</i> ' becomes: <i>They told me I <b>had to</b> go back again later.</i>
<i>will</i>	becomes: <i>would</i>	' <i>I'll come later.</i> ' becomes: <i>She told me she <b>would</b> come later.</i>
<i>may</i>	becomes: <i>might</i>	' <i>I may come.</i> ' becomes <i>He said he <b>might</b> come.</i>
<i>needn't</i>	becomes: <i>didn't need to</i> or <i>didn't have to</i> / <i>wouldn't have to</i>	' <i>You <b>needn't</b> go tonight.</i> ' becomes: <i>He said I <b>didn't need to</b> go last night.</i>

#### ? check

What are the likely original statements which these report?

- They said they would be at the station by ten.
- She said she had to wash her hair this evening.
- He tried to convince me that Goa was in Africa.
- She claimed she spent her childhood in Australia.
- She said she'd given up studying English and was going to get married instead.

## Practice

**1** Put a cross (X) by any of the options below that cannot complete the sentence. Put a question mark (?) beside any that are possible but very unlikely.

- a Tom just told me he *is / was* going home because he doesn't feel well.
- b According to Shakespeare, life *is / was* nothing but a walking shadow.
- c It's reported that there *has been / had been* a massive earthquake in Indonesia.
- d Shakespeare wrote that all the world *is / was* a stage.
- e Would you believe it, he's told the others he *has / had* passed Proficiency.
- f Ali says *he'd / he'll* see you later.
- g He told me just now he *is / was* definitely going to resign.
- h My mother was always saying that you *can / could* take a horse to water but you *can't / couldn't* make it drink.

**2** Fill each of the numbered gaps with one suitable word.

It was quite an emotional day, I ..... (1) admit. A few of the younger clerks just ..... (2) me good luck and ..... (3) I would be happy in my new job. Some of the farewells from older colleagues were quite touching; one said I ..... (4) been a kind of model for him, ..... (5) I ..... (6) rather nice. The managing director made a speech at lunchtime, the usual gushing stuff about all I ..... (7) done for the firm, how much I had ..... (8) to its ethos and how the place ..... (9) be the same without me. Fortunately he omitted to recall a conversation in which he had ..... (10) me an incompetent idiot who ..... (11) deserve to be working in a company as good as his. When it was my turn to respond, I couldn't believe the clichés I ..... (12) out with: about what a pleasure ..... (13) had been to work in a firm that ..... (14) such high standards and ..... (15) stand comparison with any company in the country; about how I ..... (16) miss everybody and how I really ..... (17) their kindness in presenting me with a pen. The cleaning lady was the last person ..... (18) say goodbye to me. She just said she'd always ..... (19) me as a gentleman. I thought that ..... (20) sweet.

**3** Write the appropriate form of the verbs in brackets. More than one form is often possible.

*Example:* He asked me if I (**be**) going to the party tonight. *am, was*

- a William says he (**want**) to be a policeman when he grows up. ....
- b Jenny called after me to ask if I (**be**) going to the party the following evening. ....
- c At lunchtime my wife called to ask me where I (**be**) all morning. ....
- d She called me on my mobile and asked me where I (**be**). ....
- e She demanded to know why I (**not come**) home last night. ....
- f She demanded to know why I (**not come**) home the night before. ....
- g Nikos asked if I (**ever visit**) Thessaloniki before. ....
- h The teacher wanted to know if I (**can take**) his class for him that evening. ....

**4** Report what the assistant said to you in each shop when you were hunting for a particular piece of computer software.

*Example:* John Brown's Software Store: 'I've never heard of that particular product. I'm not sure it exists.' *In John Brown's Software Store the man said he'd never heard of the product, adding that he wasn't sure it existed.*

- a Softly Softly: 'We don't actually stock what you want but there is a shop down the road that does.'
- b Disk Jockey: 'We normally keep them but we've had a run on them and I'm afraid we've sold out. We're expecting some in sometime next week.'
- c Apple Core: 'We only deal with Apple Mac, so we won't be able to help you.'
- d Surf'n Byte: 'We've got something very similar but I can't guarantee that it will do what you want it to do.'
- e Graphics Unlimited: 'I think there's a place not far from here where they may be able to help you. A friend of mine bought something similar from them last week.'
- f Softly Softly: 'You were here a few hours ago. We still don't stock them.'

## SECTION 2

### Report structures

#### 1 THAT-CLAUSES AND WH-CLAUSES

We use *that*-clauses to report statements:

*Jo suggested that I should go to see the film.*

- We can also use *that*-clauses to report statements which include *wh*-clauses:

*She remembered that what was strange was that the caller refused to leave his name. She claimed that whether we stayed or not made no difference to her.*

#### 2 WH-CLAUSES

We use *wh*-clauses to report questions with *wh*-words (*why*, *when*, etc.):

*The department manager asked me when I was thinking of leaving. Our neighbours wanted to know where we were going on holiday.*

#### watch out!

The word order is normally subject–verb, not verb–subject as in direct questions. There is no question mark:

- ✗ *He asked me how did I manage it?*
- ✓ *He asked me how I managed it.*

#### 3 IF-CLAUSES

We use *if*-clauses to report yes / no questions:

*My mother just rang to check if I was coming.*

- We can also use *if* / *whether* in *that*-clauses to report conditionals, or statements which talk about alternatives:

*She said that if we were staying, she'd have to make up the spare bed.*

#### 4 INFINITIVE AND -ING FORMS IN REPORTING

We can report statements, orders and questions with verbs followed by a *to*-infinitive, with and without an object:

*She promised / offered to come with us.*

*She advised me / warned us not to go with them.*

- We can also use report verbs followed by *-ing*. Sometimes we need a preposition:

*He admitted / recalled her taking the money.*

*We apologised for / accused her of taking the money.*

- Note we can use a number of structures:

*He agreed that it was a good idea / to marry her / with me / to her marrying him.*

*I advise you to go home / that your rent is due.*

*I advise taking the pills / against going there.*

#### 5 IMPERSONAL REPORTS

We can report what people generally say or think using passive report verbs. There are two structures – *It* + *that*-clause, or subject + *to*-infinitive:

*It's reputed that he's worth £100 million.*

*He's reputed to be worth £10 million.*

- Here are report verbs we use in the same way:  
*know rumour report say believe suppose feel*
- Some verbs, e.g. *suspect* and *hint*, can't be used with a *to*-infinitive structure:  
*He is suspected of being guilty of cheating.*  
*It's been hinted that he's worth even more.*
- Here are examples of report verbs we can use only in the structure *It* + *that*-clause:  
*suggest learn accept announce argue hope*

#### 6 SUMMARISING IN REPORTED SPEECH

When we report what people generally say or think, we commonly summarise the original statement. The aim is to report the meaning, not the exact words:

Original	Report
<i>'I don't know. Maybe I'll give up work for a while. I'm fed up with this job anyway. What I really want to do is to travel overseas a bit. A year, maybe.'</i>	<i>Anyway, she said she was thinking of leaving her job and going abroad, possibly for a year.</i>

#### 7 ADDING PERSONAL COMMENTS

When reporting, we may add details and give our reaction, e.g. by using a particular report verb. In this example, these interpretations are in bold:

*She was going on about leaving, which I thought was strange. She even said something about travelling, which in my opinion would be a complete waste of time.*

#### ? check

Add the missing word in each of these examples.

- Sylvia said ..... she hadn't got enough time.
- We enquired ..... or not they were staying.
- She asked ..... I would stay long.
- The firemen told us ..... leave the building.
- My father asked me ..... I intended to do.

## Practice

**1** Match the comments, (a–e) with the openings 1 (1–5). Make a report combining the two.

*Example:* I didn't know... 'Are you really going to Siberia?'

I didn't know *you were going to Siberia.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 'The president wanted it to be known ... | a 'Why haven't you got a road tax disc?'  |
| 2 Fortunately Jane let me know ...         | b 'I don't care whether you come or not.' |
| 3 The police wanted to know ...            | c 'Do you know when we're meeting next?'  |
| 4 My angry boyfriend wanted me to know ... | d 'I won't be able to pick you up.'       |
| 5 A client just wanted to check ...        | e 'I am definitely not resigning.'        |

**2** Underline all the options that can complete each sentence.

- My lawyer ..... me to be on time.  
a wanted   b offered   c asked   d told
- Many people ..... to help.  
a offered   b agreed   c didn't mind   d promised
- Their teacher ..... against talking to strangers.  
a advised   b recommended   c suggested   d warned
- My girlfriend suggested ..... alone.  
a I go   b going   c I went   d to go
- Many people ..... on Rita's new hairstyle.  
a complimented   b talked   c commented   d remarked
- In the end they agreed to our ..... two teams for the tournament.  
a entered   b enter   c entry   d entering
- I tried to ..... Tara from having her nose pierced.  
a persuade   b discourage   c encourage   d dissuade
- The actress ..... to having had first-night nerves.  
a admitted   b agreed   c accepted   d confessed

**3** Finish each of the following sentences in such a way that it is as similar as possible in meaning to the sentence printed before it.

- A man called Jorgé is allegedly the ringleader.  
A man called Jorgé is suspected .....
- People say the alleged terrorist is leaving the country tomorrow.  
The alleged terrorist is believed .....
- People say the total amount collected is nearing £100,000.  
The total amount collected is reckoned .....
- It's often said that science has done more harm than good.  
Science is often .....
- The government has been dropping hints to the effect that unemployment benefit may have to be cut.  
In government circles it .....

**4** Rewrite each sentence in two ways, a and b. You will need to use *that*-clauses, *wh*-clauses, infinitive clauses or *-ing* clauses.

*Example:* 'I've done nothing to be ashamed of,' she sobbed.

- She denied *having done anything to be ashamed of.*
  - She refused to admit *that she had been in any way responsible.*
- 'I'll be there with you lot before you can blink,' the sergeant told them.
    - The sergeant said ..... next to no time.
    - The sergeant promised ..... a matter of minutes.
  - 'I don't think employees should be forced to work overtime,' he said.
    - He disapproved ..... made to work overtime.
    - He was opposed ..... obligatory.
  - 'Either you hand over those photos, or I'll tell the Tax Office everything,' B J said to her.
    - B J threatened ..... photographs.
    - B J said that he ..... have the photos.
  - 'Do I really need to stay?' she said.
    - She enquired ..... stay.
    - She asked to be ..... leave.
  - 'I have been unfairly treated,' the number nine complained.
    - The number nine felt ..... treated.
    - The number nine claimed to ..... treatment.