

A

Verb tense in the *reported* clause

Reminder → G1–G7

When the situation described in the *reported* clause (see Unit 32) is in the *past* when we are reporting it, we use a past tense (past simple, past continuous, etc.):

- 'I don't want anything to eat.' → Yusuf **said** that he **didn't want** anything to eat.
- 'I'm leaving!' → Lamar **announced** that she **was leaving**.

When the situation described in the *reported* clause was *already* in the past when it was spoken about originally, we often use the past perfect to report it:

- 'We have found the missing girl.' → Police **said** that they **had found** the missing girl.

However, if it is clear that one event took place before another, then it may not be necessary to indicate this by using the past perfect and we use the past simple instead:

- 'I've sent out the invitations. I did it well before the wedding.' → She **reassured** me that she **sent** out the invitations well before the wedding. (*or... had sent ...*)

B

When the situation described in the *reported* clause is a *permanent / habitual situation*, or still exists or is relevant at the time we are reporting it, then we use a present tense (or present perfect) if we also use a present tense for the verb in the *reporting* clause:

- Dr Weir **thinks** that he **spends** about five minutes on a typical appointment with a patient.
- US scientists **claim** that they **have developed** a new vaccine against malaria.

Note that the present perfect focuses attention on the *result* of the action, not the action itself.

However, when we use a past tense in the *reporting* clause we can use either a present or past tense (or present perfect or past perfect) in the *reported* clause:

- She **argued** that Carl **is** / **was** the best person for the job.
- They **noted** that the rate of inflation **has** / **had slowed** down.

Choosing a present tense (or present perfect) in the *reported* clause emphasises that the situation being reported still exists or is still relevant when we report it.

If we are not sure that what we are reporting is necessarily true, or a situation may not still exist now, we prefer a *past* rather than a present tense. Compare:

- Yasemin told me that she **has** two houses. (= might suggest that this is true) *and*
- Yasemin told me that she **had** two houses. (= might suggest either that this is perhaps not true, or that she once had two houses but doesn't have two houses now)

C

Verb tense in the *reporting* clause

To report something said or thought in the past, the verb in the *reporting* clause is often in a *past* tense:

- Just before her wedding, she **revealed** that she had been married before.

When we report current news, opinions, etc. we can use a present tense for the verb in the *reporting* clause. In some cases, either a present or past tense is possible, although we prefer a present tense to emphasise that what was said is true or still relevant when we report it:

- She **says** that she'll have to close the shop unless business improves. (*or ... said ...*)

We often prefer a present rather than a past tense –

- ☆ to report information that we have been told or heard, but don't know whether it is true:
 - I **hear** you're unhappy with your job.
- ☆ to report what is said by some authority:
 - The law **says** that no one under the age of 16 can buy a lottery ticket.
- ☆ to report what many people say:
 - Every teacher I've spoken to **tells** me that standards of spelling are in decline.

Exercises

35.1 Report these sentences using the verbs from the box in the reporting clauses and either the past simple or past perfect (or both if possible) in the **that-clause**. **A**

alleged conceded ~~denied~~ estimated recalled repeated

- 1 'I have never been in love with Oliver.' →
She denied that she had ever been / was ever in love with Oliver.
- 2 'Markus has stolen jewellery from my house.' → She
- 3 'I think the vase is around 250 years old.' → She
- 4 'I've told you once. I've already seen the film.' → She
- 5 'Well, perhaps you're right. Maybe I did treat Lara unkindly.' → She
- 6 'I seem to remember that Wilma's great-grandmother was from Spain.' → She

35.2 Complete the sentences with a verb chosen from a suitable pair. If both verbs in the pair are possible, write both. **B**

has / had is / was looks / looked solved / have solved
states / stated understand / understood

- 1 Engineers hope that they the problems with the bridge now that new supports have been built, and they plan to reopen it next week.
- 2 The current law that an employee has the right to appeal against dismissal.
- 3 Simon is already a good tennis player, but he accepts that he still a lot to learn.
- 4 I that you want to buy a second-hand car. Your brother just told me.
- 5 Health officials warn that anyone who directly at the sun during an eclipse may put their sight at risk.
- 6 They reassured us that the path perfectly safe.

35.3 Jamie Barnes and Daniel Nokes have been interviewed by the police in connection with a robbery last week. If necessary, correct the tenses in the **that-clauses** in these extracts from the interview reports. If not, write ✓. Suggest possible alternatives. **A-C**

1

When I mentioned to Nokes that he had been seen in a local shop last Monday, he protested that he is at home all day. He swears that he didn't own a blue Ford Focus. He claimed that he had been to the paint factory two weeks ago to look for work. Nokes alleges that he is a good friend of Jamie Barnes. He insisted that he didn't telephone Barnes last Monday morning. When I pointed out to Nokes that a large quantity of paint had been found in his house, he replied that he is storing it for a friend.

2

At the beginning of the interview I reminded Barnes that he is entitled to have a lawyer present. He denied that he knew anyone by the name of Daniel Nokes. Barnes confirmed that he is in the area of the paint factory last Monday, but said that he is visiting his mother. He admitted that he is walking along New Street at around ten. He maintains that he was a very honest person and would never be involved in anything illegal.