



Reported Speech and Backshift — B1 exercises

Printable worksheet · 23 questions · answer key with explanations on the last page
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Name _____ Date _____ Score _____ / 23

A. Multiple choice

10 questions

Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. 'I am tired.' -> She said she ____ tired.
A) is B) has been C) was D) will be
2. 'We have finished.' -> They said they ____ finished.
A) have B) has C) were D) had
3. 'I will call you.' -> He said he ____ call me.
A) will B) would C) shall D) could
4. 'Where do you live?' -> She asked me where I ____.
A) lived B) do live C) live D) did live
5. 'Are you coming?' -> He asked ____ I was coming.
A) that B) if C) what D) which
6. 'Sit down.' -> The teacher told us ____ down.
A) sit B) sitting C) that sit D) to sit
7. Which is correct?
A) He told me he was late. B) He said me he was late.
C) He told to me he was late. D) He said to me that he late.
8. 'I saw her yesterday.' -> He said he had seen her ____.
A) yesterday B) tomorrow C) the day before D) that day
9. 'Don't touch it.' -> She warned me ____ touch it.
A) don't B) not to C) to not D) that not
10. When is backshift optional?
A) When the reporting verb is past B) When the speaker was polite
C) When the statement is still true D) Never

B. Fill in the blank

8 questions

Write the missing word or words in the gap.

1. 'I am busy.' -> She said she _____ busy.
2. 'We live in Oslo.' -> They said they _____ in Oslo.

3. 'I will help you.' -> He promised he _____ help me.
4. 'Do you smoke?' -> She asked me _____ I smoked.
5. 'Open the window.' -> He told me _____ open the window.
6. 'I have lost my wallet.' -> She said she _____ lost her wallet.
7. 'Don't be late.' -> They warned us _____ to be late.
8. He _____ me that the shop had closed early.

C. Sentence building

5 questions

Put the words in the correct order and write the sentence on the line.

1. She / she / better. / said / was / feeling / much

Report a statement about health.

2. me / had / he / eaten. / that / already / He / told

Use tell with an object and a backshifted perfect.

3. a / I / asked / wanted / lift. / if / They

Report a yes-or-no question.

4. The / anything. / touch / guide / us / to / not / told

Report a negative instruction.

5. car. / asked / left / where / She / the / I / had

Report a question with a question word.

Answer key

Every answer carries the reason behind it. Read the reason for the questions you got right as well — that is where you find out whether you were right for the right reason.

A. Multiple choice

1. **C) was** — The present simple backshifts to the past simple in reported speech.
2. **D) had** — The present perfect backshifts to the past perfect.
3. **B) would** — Will becomes would when the reporting verb is in the past.
4. **A) lived** — Reported questions lose the auxiliary and take statement word order with a backshifted tense.
5. **B) if** — A yes-or-no question needs if or whether, because there is no question word to carry over.
6. **D) to sit** — Commands are reported with told plus an object plus a to-infinitive.
7. **A) He told me he was late.** — Tell takes a direct object; say does not. You tell somebody, but you say something.
8. **C) the day before** — Time words shift too: yesterday becomes the day before or the previous day.
9. **B) not to** — A negative command is reported with not to plus the base verb.
10. **C) When the statement is still true** — If the fact still holds — she said she lives in Cardiff — the present tense may be kept.

B. Fill in the blank

1. **was** — The present simple of be backshifts to the past simple.
2. **lived** — The present simple becomes the past simple after a past reporting verb.
3. **would** — Will backshifts to would.
4. **if** — A yes-or-no question is reported with if or whether.
5. **to** — Commands are reported with told plus a to-infinitive.
6. **had** — The present perfect backshifts to the past perfect.
7. **not** — A negative instruction takes not before the to-infinitive.
8. **told** — Tell takes a direct object; say would need to before me.

C. Sentence building

1. **She said she was feeling much better.**
2. **He told me that he had already eaten.**
3. **They asked if I wanted a lift.**
4. **The guide told us not to touch anything.**
5. **She asked where I had left the car.**