

VERB TENSE SHIFTS

This is a typical English language feature. It is important to keep to the correct time frame, especially in a narrative essay telling a story in the past. A helpful hint here would be the logical distinction between “now” and “then”. Some typical examples can be given with verbs of cognition and senses (*think, know understand, feel, realize*) used as main verbs in an independent clause; then the verbs in the relative clause should be related to what I think/feel now and what I thought/felt then. In addition, there are changes in time references, pronouns, and word order with reported questions.

| Then | Now |
|---|---|
| <i>The main verb in the independent clause is in present tense, the other verb is in:</i> | <i>The main verb in the independent clause is in past tense, the other verb is in:</i> |
| <i>Future in the past</i> | <i>Future simple</i> |
| I thought she would write a report the following week. | I think she will write a report next week. |
| <i>Past form of "To BE"</i> | <i>Present form of "To BE"</i> |
| I thought she was going to write a report the following week. | I think she is going to write a report next week. |
| <i>Past Simple</i> | <i>Present Simple</i> |
| I thought she worked for Coca Cola. | I think she works for Coca Cola. |
| <i>Past Progressive</i> | <i>Present Progressive</i> |
| I thought she was writing a report then. | I think she is writing a report now. |
| <i>Past Perfect</i> | <i>Present Perfect</i> |
| I thought she had written a report. | I think she has written a report. |
| <i>Past Perfect</i> | <i>Past Simple</i> |
| I thought she had written a report the week before. | I think she wrote a report last week. |
| <i>Modal verbs with past-tense forms:</i> | |
| I thought she could do it. | I think she can do it. |
| I thought she might come. | I think she may come. |
| <i>Examples with reported speech, following the above rules:</i> | |
| My friend boasted that his car was faster than mine. | "My car is faster than yours," my friend boasted. |
| Smiling, she said that she had been at their wedding the week before. | She smiled and said, "Yes, I was at their wedding last month." |
| The supervisor said that was going to be the last time he was explaining the procedure. | "This is going to be the last time I am explaining the procedure," the supervisor said. |
| <i>No interrogative structure in reported questions if/whether used for reporting general questions:</i> | |
| She asked if I was going with them. | She asked, "Are you coming with us?" |
| She asked whether I knew John's phone number. | "Do you know John's phone number?" she asked. |
| The teacher asked me where my schoolbag was. | "Where is your schoolbag?" the teacher asked me. |
| My sister asked what I had done with her new car. | "What have you done with my new car?" my sister asked. |

| <i>Change of time reference with reported speech</i> | |
|---|---|
| that moment/week/month/year | this moment/week/month/year |
| that day | today |
| the day before / the previous day | yesterday |
| the day after / the following day | tomorrow |
| after three days | in three days |
| <i>Changes in pronoun usage with reported speech (use the logical pronoun for the particular situation):</i> | |
| Jane and Christian told me <u>they</u> wanted to invite <u>me</u> to <u>their</u> wedding party. | “ <u>We</u> want to invite <u>you</u> to <u>our</u> wedding party,” Jane and Christian told me. |

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