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Basics. Reported Speech: Tense Choice and Backshifting

Hard | B2 | Upper Intermediate | Adverb | Clause | Complex sentence | Future tense | Indirect speech | Modal verb | Negation | Past tense | Present tense | Questions | Sentence | Verb | Verb tense | Perfect tense | Progressive tense | Word order

1. Help the frustrated roommate complete their dramatic text message.

When I confronted him about the missing chocolate cake, he insisted that he ___ it. However, the frosting on his nose told a different story!

Select one.

A) hadn't eaten
B) hasn't eaten
C) wasn't eating
D) wouldn't eat

2. Complete this text message to your best friend about the most awkward blind date ever by selecting the correct indirect question forms.

You won't believe this guy! First, he asked me where _____ in five years. Then, he wanted to know if _____ married before. Finally, as I was literally bolting for the door, he yelled out to ask why _____ my dessert so fast!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1
A) I saw myself
B) did I see myself
C) do I see myself

Blank 2
A) I had ever been
B) had I ever been
C) I have ever been

Blank 3
A) I was eating
B) was I eating
C) am I eating

3. Help the gossip columnist finish her latest scoop by choosing the correct verb for each blank. Pay close attention to the reporting verbs!

The pop star's agent says that she _____ to Paris next week and confirms that she _____ her bags.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1
A) is moving
B) was moving
C) had moved

Blank 2
A) has already packed
B) had already packed
C) will have packed

4. Help the gossip columnist finish her scandalous article by selecting the correct reported forms for each gap!

Last week, the demanding pop star insisted that she _____ only drink water from a specific Icelandic glacier. She also threw a tantrum and declared that her manager _____ her new yacht ready by _____.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** would
- **B)** will
- **C)** shall

Blank 2

- **A)** had to have
- **B)** must have had
- **C)** has to have

Blank 3

- **A)** the following day
- **B)** tomorrow
- **C)** yesterday

5. Complete the office gossip's email by choosing the correct verb phrase.

Did you hear? The boss has just announced that she ___ the company next month to start a llama farm!

Select one.

- **A)** is leaving
- **B)** was leaving
- **C)** had been leaving
- **D)** left

6. Complete the HR report about a dramatic office meeting by choosing the correct verb for each blank.

The angry manager shouted that he _____ there for ten years and declared that he _____ under any circumstances.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** had been working
- **B)** has been working
- **C)** was working

Blank 2

- **A)** would not resign
- **B)** will not resign
- **C)** did not resign

7. Help Detective Santiago finalize her case notes! Select ALL the grammatically correct ways she can report the suspect's somewhat embarrassing alibi.

Original quote from the suspect: "I ate the entire pepperoni pizza by myself."

Select all that apply.

- **A)** The suspect claimed that he had eaten the entire pepperoni pizza by himself.
- **B)** The suspect claimed that he ate the entire pepperoni pizza by himself.
- **C)** The suspect claimed that he has eaten the entire pepperoni pizza by himself.
- **D)** The suspect claimed that he eats the entire pepperoni pizza by himself.

8. Select the grammatically correct phrase to complete the tour guide's anecdote.

A tourist came up to me yesterday looking completely lost and asked me ___.

Select one.

- **A)** where the nearest restroom was
- **B)** where was the nearest restroom
- **C)** where the nearest restroom had been
- **D)** where did the nearest restroom be

9. Read the aspiring astronaut's diary and help spread the gossip. Select ALL the sentences that correctly report his dramatic declaration to his friends.

Original quote: "I would travel to Mars, but I am terrified of aliens."

Select all that apply.

A) He said he would travel to Mars, but he was terrified of aliens.
B) He said he would travel to Mars, but he is terrified of aliens.
C) He said he will travel to Mars, but he had been terrified of aliens.
D) He said he had travelled to Mars, but he was terrified of aliens.

10. Help the detective update the official case file by choosing the correct verb forms. Pay close attention to whether the reporting verb is in the past or present!

Yesterday, the suspect claimed that he _____ when the bank was robbed. But just now, his lawyer insists that the suspect _____ actually out of the country at the time, and promises that the defense team _____ the flight records tomorrow.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) had been sleeping
B) has been sleeping
C) is sleeping

Blank 2

A) was
B) is
C) has been

Blank 3

A) will provide
B) would provide
C) would have provided

11. You are sharing some bizarre trivia from your biology class with a friend. Select ALL the sentences that correctly report Professor Higgins's strange biological fact.

Original quote: "Octopuses have three hearts."

Select all that apply.

A) Professor Higgins said that octopuses have three hearts.
B) Professor Higgins said that octopuses had three hearts.
C) Professor Higgins said that octopuses had had three hearts.
D) Professor Higgins says that octopuses had three hearts.

12. Complete the journalist's article about a very confused time traveler by choosing the correct phrase for each gap.

The eccentric scientist explained that he _____ to visit the dinosaurs when his engine failed, and muttered that he _____ the machine before Tuesday.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) had been trying
B) was trying
C) has been trying

Blank 2

A) had to fix
B) must have fixed
C) has to fix