



Reported Questions: Tense Backshift in Questions

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

- "Where does Tom work?" → She asked where Tom ____.
a) works
b) worked
c) does work
d) had worked
- "What is she reading?" → He asked what she ____.
a) was reading
b) is reading
c) reads
d) had been reading
- "Have you eaten lunch?" → She asked if I ____ lunch.
a) had eaten
b) have eaten
c) ate
d) was eating
- "Where did you buy that jacket?" → He asked me where I ____ that jacket.
a) bought
b) had bought
c) did buy
d) have bought
- "Why were you laughing?" → She asked me why I ____.
a) had been laughing
b) was laughing
c) laughed
d) am laughing
- "How long have you been waiting?" → She asked me how long I ____.
a) had been waiting
b) have been waiting
c) was waiting
d) waited
- "Do your parents know about this?" → She asked if my parents ____ about that.
a) know
b) knew
c) do know
d) had known
- "What were they talking about?" → He asked what they ____.
a) were talking about
b) talked about
c) are talking about
d) had been talking about
- "Where has she gone?" → He asked where she ____.
a) has gone
b) went
c) was going
d) had gone
- "Did you enjoy the concert?" → She asked if I ____ the concert.
a) enjoyed
b) had enjoyed
c) did enjoy
d) was enjoying
- "Are you feeling better?" → The doctor asked if I ____ better.
a) was feeling
b) am feeling
c) felt
d) had felt



Answers

1. b) worked
2. a) was reading
3. a) had eaten
4. b) had bought
5. a) had been laughing
6. a) had been waiting
7. b) knew
8. d) had been talking about
9. d) had gone
10. b) had enjoyed
11. a) was feeling
12. d) had read
13. c) had started
14. c) was studying
15. c) had put
16. c) had been living
17. b) thought
18. d) had been constructed
19. c) understood
20. d) had lasted



Explanations

1. “worked” (b)

Present simple 'work' (after removing 'does') backshifts to past simple 'worked'. This is the most basic tense backshift in reported questions.

2. “was reading” (a)

Present continuous 'is reading' backshifts to past continuous 'was reading'. The continuous aspect (-ing form) is preserved.

3. “had eaten” (a)

Present perfect 'have eaten' backshifts to past perfect 'had eaten'. Both use the past participle 'eaten', but the auxiliary changes from 'have' to 'had'.

4. “had bought” (b)

Past simple 'bought' (after removing 'did') backshifts to past perfect 'had bought'. Remember: 'did' is removed in reported questions and the tense shifts one step further back.

5. “had been laughing” (a)

Past continuous 'were laughing' backshifts to past perfect continuous 'had been laughing'. The continuous form is preserved to show the ongoing nature of the action.

6. “had been waiting” (a)

Present perfect continuous 'have been waiting' backshifts to past perfect continuous 'had been waiting'. Both continuous forms use the -ing form.

7. “knew” (b)

Remove 'do' and backshift: 'know' becomes 'knew' (irregular). Also note: 'your' → 'my' and 'this' → 'that'.

8. “had been talking about” (d)

Past continuous 'were talking about' backshifts to past perfect continuous 'had been talking about'. The preposition 'about' stays at the end.

9. “had gone” (d)

Present perfect 'has gone' backshifts to past perfect 'had gone'. The auxiliary changes from 'has' to 'had', while the past participle 'gone' stays the same.

10. “had enjoyed” (b)

Remove 'did' and backshift: past simple 'enjoyed' becomes past perfect 'had enjoyed'. 'Did you enjoy' → 'I had enjoyed' (statement order + backshift).

11. “was feeling” (a)

Present continuous 'are feeling' backshifts to past continuous 'was feeling'. 'You' changes to 'I' and 'are' changes to 'was'.

12. “had read” (d)

Present perfect 'have read' backshifts to past perfect 'had read'. Note: the verb 'read' has the same spelling in all forms but different pronunciations. 'This year' → 'that year'.

13. “had started” (c)

Remove 'did' and backshift: past simple 'started' becomes past perfect 'had started'. Word order: 'why did the meeting start' → 'why the meeting had started'.

14. “was studying” (c)

Present continuous 'is studying' backshifts to past continuous 'was studying'. 'Your' changes to 'my'.

15. “had put” (c)

Remove 'did' and backshift: past simple 'put' becomes past perfect 'had put'. Note: 'put' is an irregular verb with the same form in all tenses (put → put → put).

16. “had been living” (c)

Present perfect continuous 'have been living' backshifts to past perfect continuous 'had been living'. 'Here' changes to 'there'.

17. “thought” (b)

Remove 'do' and backshift: 'think' becomes 'thought' (irregular verb). Word order: 'what do you think' → 'what I thought'.

18. “had been constructed” (d)

Past simple passive 'was constructed' backshifts to past perfect passive 'had been constructed'. This shows backshift also applies to passive forms in questions.

19. “understood” (c)

Remove 'does' and backshift: 'understand' becomes 'understood' (irregular verb). Statement order: 'he understood'.

20. “had lasted” (d)

Remove 'did' and backshift: past simple 'lasted' becomes past perfect 'had lasted'. Word order: 'how long did the film last' → 'how long the film had lasted'.