



Reported Statements: Past & Perfect Tense Backshift

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

- "I bought a new car." He said he ____ a new car.
a) buys
b) bought
c) had bought
d) has bought
- "I saw your sister at the mall." She told me she ____ my sister at the mall.
a) had seen
b) saw
c) has seen
d) sees
- "We went to Paris last summer." They said they ____ to Paris the previous summer.
a) went
b) had gone
c) have gone
d) go
- "I lost my wallet on the bus." He said he ____ his wallet on the bus.
a) loses
b) lost
c) has lost
d) had lost
- "She wrote me a long letter." He told us she ____ him a long letter.
a) writes
b) wrote
c) had written
d) has written
- "I met Tom at the party." She said she ____ Tom at the party.
a) meets
b) met
c) has met
d) had met
- "The children broke the window." She said the children ____ the window.
a) had broken
b) broke
c) have broken
d) break
- "I took the train to work." He told me he ____ the train to work.
a) takes
b) had taken
c) took
d) has taken
- "I have finished my homework." She said she ____ her homework.
a) has finished
b) finished
c) had finished
d) finishes
- "We have already eaten dinner." They told us they ____ already ____ dinner.
a) have ... eaten
b) had ... eaten
c) has ... eaten
d) were ... eating
- "I have never been to Japan." He said he ____ never ____ to Japan.
a) has ... been
b) have ... been
c) was ... being
d) had ... been



Answers

1. c) had bought
2. a) had seen
3. b) had gone
4. d) had lost
5. c) had written
6. d) had met
7. a) had broken
8. b) had taken
9. c) had finished
10. b) had ... eaten
11. d) had ... been
12. a) had ... left
13. d) had known
14. b) had lived
15. c) had read
16. a) had been studying
17. c) had been playing
18. d) had been waiting
19. a) had been having
20. b) had been working



Explanations

1. “had bought” (c)

The direct speech uses past simple ('bought'). In reported speech, past simple backshifts to past perfect: 'bought' → 'had bought'. The option 'bought' (no backshift) is the most common student error.

2. “had seen” (a)

Past simple 'saw' backshifts to past perfect 'had seen' in reported speech. Notice the pronoun change: 'your' → 'my'. 'Saw' without backshift is incorrect because we are reporting at a later time.

3. “had gone” (b)

Past simple 'went' becomes past perfect 'had gone'. Also notice the time expression change: 'last summer' → 'the previous summer'. 'Went' alone does not show the shift to an earlier time.

4. “had lost” (d)

Past simple 'lost' backshifts to past perfect 'had lost'. 'Lost' without backshift fails to show the time relationship between the original statement and the reporting moment.

5. “had written” (c)

Past simple 'wrote' becomes past perfect 'had written'. The irregular verb forms are write → wrote → written. Also note the pronoun change: 'me' → 'him'.

6. “had met” (d)

Past simple 'met' backshifts to past perfect 'had met'. The irregular verb 'meet' has the forms meet → met → met. The past perfect shows the meeting happened before the moment of reporting.

7. “had broken” (a)

Past simple 'broke' becomes past perfect 'had broken' in reported speech. The irregular verb forms are break → broke → broken. 'Broke' without backshift is a common mistake.

8. “had taken” (b)

Past simple 'took' backshifts to past perfect 'had taken'. The irregular verb forms are take → took → taken. The past perfect places the action before the reporting time.

9. “had finished” (c)

Present perfect 'have finished' backshifts to past perfect 'had finished'. Both tenses use the past participle, but the auxiliary changes from 'have/has' to 'had'. Also note the pronoun change: 'my' → 'her'.

10. “had ... eaten” (b)

Present perfect 'have already eaten' becomes past perfect 'had already eaten'. The adverb 'already' stays in the same position between the auxiliary and the past participle.

11. “had ... been” (d)

Present perfect 'have never been' backshifts to past perfect 'had never been'. The adverb 'never' keeps its position. 'Has been' is wrong because the pronoun changed to 'he', and backshift is still required.

12. “had ... left” (a)

Present perfect 'has just left' becomes past perfect 'had just left'. The adverb 'just' stays between the auxiliary and the past participle. 'Has left' fails to apply the required backshift.

13. “had known” (d)

Present perfect 'have known' backshifts to past perfect 'had known'. This sentence uses present perfect for duration ('for ten years'), and the past perfect preserves this meaning in reported speech.

14. “had lived” (b)

Present perfect 'have lived' becomes past perfect 'had lived'. Notice the place change: 'here' → 'there'. The time marker 'since 2010' stays the same because it is a specific date.

15. “had read” (c)

Present perfect 'have read' backshifts to past perfect 'had read'. The irregular verb 'read' has the same spelling in all forms (read /ri:d/ → read /red/ → read /red/) but different pronunciations.

16. “had been studying” (a)

Past continuous 'was studying' backshifts to past perfect continuous 'had been studying'. This shows the ongoing action was in progress at an earlier time. 'Was studying' without backshift is a common error.

17. “had been playing” (c)

Past continuous 'were playing' becomes past perfect continuous 'had been playing'. This preserves the sense of an ongoing activity. 'Were playing' without backshift does not show the time shift.

18. “had been waiting” (d)

Past continuous 'was waiting' backshifts to past perfect continuous 'had been waiting'. The continuous aspect (-ing form) is preserved to show the action was ongoing. 'Was waiting' is incorrect because backshift is needed.

19. “had been having” (a)

Past continuous 'were having' becomes past perfect continuous 'had been having'. Although 'having dinner' is a temporary activity, the continuous form is maintained through the backshift.

20. “had been working” (b)

Past continuous 'was working' backshifts to past perfect continuous 'had been working'. Notice the time expression change: 'last night' → 'the night before'. 'Was working' without backshift does not reflect the reported time frame.