

distancing

seem / appear

- 1 It **seems / appears that** when older people stay busy, they are in fact much healthier.
The new Head of Department **seems / appears to be** quite friendly. Excuse me. **There seems / appears to be** a mistake with the bill.
 - 2 It **would seem / appear that** Mr Young had been using the company's assets to pay off his private debts.
- 1 We often use *seem* and *appear* to give information without stating that we definitely know it is true, in this way distancing ourselves from the information.
We can use *It seems / appears + that + clause*, or *subject + seem / appear + infinitive*.
- 2 We use *It would seem / appear + that + clause* to distance ourselves even further from the information, making it sound even less sure. This is more formal than *It seems / appears...*

the passive with verbs of saying and reporting

- 1 **It is said that** using a washing machine saves people on average 47 minutes a day.
It has been announced by a spokesperson that the President has been taken to hospital.
 - 2 The company director is **expected to resign** in the next few days. The missing couple **are understood to have been living** in Panama for the last five years.
 - 3 **There are thought to be** over a thousand species in danger of extinction.
- Another way of distancing ourselves from the facts, especially in formal written English, is to use the passive form of verbs like *say*, *think*, etc. to introduce them. We can use:
 - 1 *It + passive verb + that + clause*.
 - 2 *subject + passive verb + to + infinitive*.
 - Verbs commonly used in this pattern are: *agree, announce, believe, claim, expect, hope, say, suggest, and think*.
 - Verbs commonly used in this pattern are: *believe, consider, expect, report, say, think, and understand*.
 - **There are said to be** more than five million people living in poverty in this country.
 - **There are understood to be** more than five million people living in poverty in this country.

other distancing expressions: *apparently, according to, may / might, claim*

- 1 **Apparently**, Jeff and Katie have separated.
 - 2 **According to** new research, the idea that we have to drink two litres of water a day is a myth.
 - 3 Dinosaurs **may have died out** due to extremely rapid climate change. There are rumours that the band, who broke up ten years ago, **might be planning** to reform and record a new album.
 - 4 The health minister **claims** to have reduced waiting times.
- 1 We use *apparently* (usually either at the beginning or the end of a phrase) to mean that we have heard / read something, but that it may not be true. This is very common in informal conversation.
- 2 We use *according to* to specify where information has come from. We use it to attribute opinions to somebody else. **NOT According to me...**
- 3 Using *may / might* also suggests that something is a possibility, but not necessarily true.
- 4 We can say that somebody *claims* something when there is some doubt about whether it is true.

- a Complete the sentences with one word to distance the speaker from the information. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

Apparently, people who multitask often have concentration problems.

- 1 It _____ that the less children sleep, the more likely they are to behave badly.
- 2 It _____ appear that someone has been stealing personal items from the changing rooms.
- 3 Matt _____ to have aged a lot over the last year.
- 4 He may not look it, but he is _____ to be one of the wealthiest people in the country.
- 5 _____ to some sources, the latest research is seriously flawed.
- 6 Despite the fact that there will be an autopsy, his death is _____ to have been from natural causes.
- 7 _____ are thought to be several reasons why the experiment failed.
- 8 The troubled celebrity is believed _____ have had financial difficulties.
- 9 It is understood _____ the minister will be resigning in the near future.

- b Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first.

People say that mindfulness helps people to deal with stressful work environments.

It is *said that mindfulness helps people to deal with stressful work environments*.

- 1 Apparently, people who work night shifts die younger. It would _____ die younger.
- 2 It is possible that the prisoners escaped to France. The prisoners may _____ to France.
- 3 We expect that the Prime Minister will make a statement this afternoon. The Prime Minister is _____ this afternoon.
- 4 The company has announced that the new drug will go on sale shortly. It _____ will go on sale shortly.
- 5 People believe that stress is responsible for many common skin complaints. Stress _____ for many common skin complaints.
- 6 The instructions say that the battery lasts for at least 12 hours. According _____ for at least 12 hours.
- 7 It appears that the government is intending to lower the top rate of income tax. The government _____ the top rate of income tax.
- 8 People have suggested that birth order has a strong influence on children's personalities. It _____ a strong influence on children's personalities.
- 9 It seems that there are more cyclists on the road than there used to be. There _____ than there used to be.

unreal uses of past tenses

- 1 It's so expensive! I **wish** I **could** afford it!
I **wish** (that) you **hadn't spoken** to Julie like that – you know how sensitive she is.
- 2 **If only** he **were** a bit less stubborn! Then we wouldn't have so many arguments!
If only you **hadn't forgotten** the map, we'd be there by now.
- 3 I **wish** she **were** a bit more generous.
If only the weather **were** a bit warmer, we could walk there.



- 4 I'd rather you **left** your dog outside – I'm allergic to animals. Are you sure this is a good time to talk? **Would you rather** I called back later?
- 5 Don't you think it's **time** you **found** a job? It's six months since you finished university!

- 1 We use **wish** + past simple to talk about things we would like to be different in the present / future (but which are impossible or unlikely).
We use **wish** + past perfect to talk about things which happened / didn't happen in the past and which we now regret.
 - We sometimes use **that** after **wish**.
- 2 We sometimes use **If only...** instead of **I wish...** It is less common and more emphatic. It can be used by itself, e.g. *If only I hadn't said it!* but it can also be used with another clause, e.g. *If only I hadn't said it, none of this would have happened!*
 - When we want to talk about things we want to happen or stop happening because they annoy us, we use **wish** or **If only** + person / thing + **would** + infinitive, e.g. *I wish the bus would come!* *If only he wouldn't keep whistling when I'm working!*
- 3 We can use **were** instead of **was** for **I / he / she / it** after **wish** and **if only**.
- 4 We use **would rather** + subject + past tense to express a preference.
 - We can also use **would rather** + infinitive without **to** when there is no change of subject, e.g. *I'd rather not talk about it.* However, we cannot use this structure when the subject changes after **would rather**, e.g. *I'd rather you didn't talk about it.* **NOT** *I'd rather you not talk about it.*
- 5 We use the past simple after **It's (high) time** + subject to say that something has to be done now or in the near future.
 - We can also use **It's time** + **to** + infinitive when we don't want to specify the subject, e.g. *It's time to go now.*

- a Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

I wish I **hadn't lent** Gary that money now. Who knows when he'll pay it back? (not lend)

- 1 It's high time the government _____ that most people disagree with their education policy. (realize)
- 2 My wife would rather we _____ a flat nearer the city centre, but we can't afford it. (buy)
- 3 I wish you _____ to stay a bit longer last night – we were having such a good time! (be able)
- 4 Would you rather we _____ the subject now? (not discuss)
- 5 I think it's time the company _____ expecting us to do overtime for no extra pay. (stop)
- 6 **If only** I _____ a bit more when I was earning a salary, I wouldn't be so hard up now. (save)
- 7 I'd rather you _____ me in cash, please. (pay)
- 8 **If only** we _____ the name of the shop, we could google it and see where it is. (know)
- 9 Do you wish you _____ to university or are you glad you left school and started work? (go)

- b Complete the sentences using the **bold** word or phrase.

The children ought to go to bed. It's nine o'clock. **time**
It's time the children went to bed. It's nine o'clock.

- 1 I'd prefer you not to wear shoes in the living room, if you don't mind. **rather**
_____, if you don't mind.
- 2 I would like to be able to afford to travel more. **wish**
_____ travel more.
- 3 We shouldn't have painted the room blue – it looks awful **if only**
_____ – it looks awful!
- 4 Don't you think you should start looking for your own flat? **time**
Don't you think _____ for your own flat?
- 5 He's so rude, he's really difficult to work with. **if only**
_____, he'd be easier to work with.
- 6 Would you prefer us to come another day? **rather**
_____ another day?
- 7 I should have bought the tickets last week. They would have been cheaper then. **wish**
_____ last week.
They would have been cheaper then.
- 8 It's really inconvenient when he turns up without letting us know. **if only**
_____ before he turns up.