

Refresh your memory

Past simple

He told them.
completed actions

Past continuous

He was telling them.
background situations

Past perfect

He had already told them.
one past event before another

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Advice structures

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1.3 Grammar Past tenses and advice structures

Test yourself: Past tenses

- 1** Complete the anecdote by choosing the best tense in each case: past continuous (*was / were doing*), past simple (*did*) or past perfect (*had done*).

A large corporation had just hired a new CEO. As the old CEO was leaving, he discreetly presented his successor with three envelopes numbered one, two and three. 'If you have a problem you can't solve, open the first of these,' he (1) _____ (tell) the new CEO.

Well, at first things went smoothly, but after six months sales (2) _____ (fall) by 10% and the shareholders were getting very impatient. The CEO (3) _____ (begin) to despair, when he remembered the envelopes the old CEO (4) _____ (give) him.

He went to his office, closed the door and opened the first envelope. The message read, 'Try blaming your predecessor.' The new CEO (5) _____ (call) a press conference and tactfully blamed the previous CEO for the company's problems. The shareholders and the press were satisfied with his explanations, and a few weeks later the CEO was relieved to see that sales (6) _____ (improve) by 12%.

About a year later, the company was having serious production problems. The CEO (7) _____ (learn) from his previous experience: as soon as he (8) _____ (close) his office door, he opened the second envelope. The message read, 'You ought to reorganize.' He immediately reorganized production, and the company quickly recovered.

A year or two after that, costs (9) _____ (rise) day by day and the company was in trouble again. The CEO went to his office, (10) _____ (close) the door and opened the third envelope. The message read, 'You might want to prepare three envelopes.'

Test yourself: Advice structures

- 2** An intern needs help understanding a company's work culture. Complete the advice structures using *ask*, *asking* or *to ask*.

- 1 You should _____ your supervisor.
- 2 Have you considered _____ your supervisor?
- 3 How about _____ your supervisor?
- 4 It's a good idea _____ your supervisor.
- 5 Have you thought of _____ your supervisor?
- 6 You could _____ your supervisor.
- 7 It's wise _____ your supervisor.
- 8 Why don't you _____ your supervisor?
- 9 You ought _____ your supervisor.
- 10 You might want _____ your supervisor.
- 11 Have you tried _____ your supervisor?
- 12 It's important _____ your supervisor.

Which five phrases are examples of strong recommendations?

Which seven phrases are examples of careful or friendly suggestions?