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Grammar Reference

1. Grammar Reference: Active and passive reporting clauses

Reporting verbs introduce what someone thinks, believes, or says. The object of the reporting verb is a noun clause. Often noun clauses introduced by the word *that*, although in spoken English *that* is often left out. Some verbs frequently used in reporting clauses are *agree*, *argue*, *assume*, *believe*, *claim*, *feel*, *say*, *report*, and *think*.

Example:

Several **people felt that** logic, not superstition, was the best way to make this decision.

He explained to the teacher **that** spilling salt doesn't mean bad luck in this country.

We believe walking under a ladder is bad luck.

To report a general claim or opinion, we use *it* and a passive reporting verb. This is often seen in written or formal English, not in conversational English. The agent (by + noun) is often left out in the passive voice, but especially in reporting clauses, because it is understood to mean some or many people.

Example:

It is believed (by many people) **that** gorillas can learn to use sign language.

It is assumed that if a black cat crosses your path, it is a sign of bad luck.

It is estimated fifty percent of the population believes in ghosts.

It was explained that the device emits a sound that irritates only young people.

It is said that the video ran for over nine months.

Reporting clauses in the passive may be in many tenses and may include the use of modals.

Example: **It was commonly denied that...**
It has been estimated that...
It could be assumed that...
It should have been believed
that...