

# Past or Present



When writing, you may be confused at times about the use of past or present tenses. Here are a few tips:

## Use Simple Past

when stating your research methods and results

*My research **tested** the validity of the theory in English. Fifteen learners **were** interviewed.*

when referring to other scholars' research methods and results at the time of the research

*Johnston's (1991) data **showed** that production of the structure **was** rare among lower level learners but **increased** with proficiency levels.*

When referring to other scholars' opinions that was true in the past but may have changed

*Brown (1993) **maintained** that bullying **was** a serious issue in schools.*

## Use Simple Present

when stating other people's ideas

*Towell and Hawkins (1994) **comment** that Universal Grammar **cannot offer** adequate explanations of developmental sequences and variability in second language acquisition.*

when stating your research conclusions or others' research conclusions

*Overall, my research **shows** that the theory **can explain** the development of English as a second language.*

*Brown's study (1993) **shows** that bullying **is** a serious issue in schools.*

when stating theories

*This theory **explains** language development from an information processing perspective.*

when expressing your opinion of other research or literature

*Johnston's study (1991), overall, **is** too simplistic. Nonetheless, the study **reveals** how language use **plays** a role in language development.*

## Use Present Perfect

when referring to views or past research findings that are still relevant to the current time. This is an alternative to using Simple Present and is mainly used with reporting verbs (e.g. *find*, *explain*, *argue*).

*Johnston's study (1991) **has found** that language use **plays** a role in language development.*