

seem / appear

- 1 **It seems / appears** (that) there is a direct relation between your position in the family and your personality.
The new head of department **seems / appears to be** quite friendly.
Excuse me. **There seems 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, and 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 us even further from the information, and to make it sound 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 White House spokesman **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*.

• Verbs commonly used in this pattern are: *agree*, *announce*, *believe*, *expect*, *hope*, *report*, *say*, *suggest*, *think*, and *understand*.

2 *subject + passive verb + to + infinitive*.

• Verbs commonly used in this pattern are *believe*, *expect*, *report*, *say*, *think*, and *understand*.

3 *There can also be used + passive verb + to + infinitive*.

Compare:

It is said that there are more than five million people living in poverty in this country.

There are said to be more than five million people living in poverty in this country.

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

- 1 **Apparently**, Maurice and Yvette 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 disbanded in the late 80s, **might** be planning to re-form and record a new album.

We can 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.

We can use *according to* to specify where information has come from. We use it to attribute opinions to somebody else **NOT** *According to me...*

Using *may / might* also suggests that something is a possibility, but not necessarily true.

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

Apparently, Lisa and Dani are going to get married. Have you heard anything?

- It _____ that the less children sleep, the more likely they are to behave badly.
- It _____ appear that someone has been stealing personal items from the changing rooms.
- Mark _____ to have aged a lot over the last year.
- He may not look it, but he is _____ to be one of the wealthiest people in the country.
- _____ to some sources, the latest research is seriously flawed.
- Despite the fact that there will be an autopsy, his death _____ have been from natural causes.
- _____ are thought to be several reasons why the species died out.
- The missing couple are believed _____ have had financial difficulties.
- It is understood _____ the minister will be resigning in the near future.

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

People say that eating garlic stops you catching colds.

It is *said that eating garlic stops you catching colds*.

- 1 Apparently, people who work night shifts die younger.

It would _____

- 2 It is possible that the prisoners escaped to France.

The prisoners may _____

- 3 We expect that the Prime Minister will make a statement this afternoon.

The Prime Minister is _____

- 4 The company has announced that the new drug will go on sale shortly.

It _____

- 5 People believe that improvements in diet and lifestyle are responsible for the rise in life expectancy.

Improvements in diet and lifestyle _____

- 6 The manual says you have to charge the phone for at least 12 hours.

According _____

- 7 It appears that the government is intending to lower interest rates.

The government _____

- 8 People have suggested that the painting is a fake.

It _____

- 9 It seems that there are more cyclists around than there used to be.

There _____

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It has been announced that the new...

- 5 People believe that improvements in diet and lifestyle are responsible for the rise in life expectancy.

Improvements in diet and lifestyle are believed to be responsible.

- 6 The manual says you have to charge the phone for at least 12 hours.

According to the manual, you have to...

- 7 It appears that the government is intending to lower interest rates.

The government appears to be intending to...

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It has been suggested that the painting...

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