If the verb in the **principal clause** is in the past tense, the verb in the **subordinate clauses**, too, will be in the past tense.

- She **told** me that she **was** ill. (NOT She told me that she is ill.)
- I **knew** that he **would** come. (NOT I knew that he will come.)
- He **realized** that he **had forgotten** to take the keys. (NOT He realized that he has forgotten to take the keys.)

There are some exceptions to this rule.

A **past tense** in the **principal clause** may be followed by a **present tense** in the **subordinate clause** when the subordinate clause expresses some universal truth or general facts.

Study the sentences given below.

- Copernicus **proved** that the earth **moves** round the sun. **OR** Copernicus **proved** that the earth **moved** round the sun.
- The teacher **said** that honesty **is** the best policy. **OR** The teacher **said** that honesty **was** the best policy.

As you can see, both **present** and **past tenses** are possible in these cases. However, the **present tense** is more appropriate.

**If the subordinate clause is an adverb clause**

If the subordinate clause is an adverb clause of place, reason or comparison, even if the verb in the main clause is in the past tense, it can be followed by any tense.

- A great city once **stood** where now **lies** the village of Rajgir.
- He **failed** because he **is** weak in English.

In subordinate clauses introduced by **when, until, before, if** and **after**, we use a present tense to refer to the future.

- I **will call** you when dinner **is** ready. (NOT I will call you when dinner will be ready.)
- She **will come** if you **invite** her. (NOT She will come if you will invite her.)
- I **will finish** the report before I **leave**. (NOT I will finish the report before I will leave.)