

Grammar: Reported Speech

Direct speech vs. Reported speech:

Direct speech	Reported speech
She says: "I like tuna fish."	She says that she likes tuna fish.
She said: "I'm visiting Paris next weekend"	She said that she was visiting Paris the following weekend.

Reporting Verbs:

If the reporting verb (*say, tell, ask...*) is

- in the present, there is no change in tense although other changes may occur;
- in the past, tense as well as other changes occur.

	Direct speech	Reported speech
(no backshift)	"I write poems."	He <u>says</u> that he <u>writes</u> poems.
(backshift)	"I write poems."	He <u>said</u> that he <u>wrote</u> poems.

Examples:

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Simple Present He said: "I am happy"	Simple Past He said that he was happy
Present Progressive He said: "I'm looking for my keys"	Past Progressive He said that he was looking for his keys
Simple Past He said: "I visited New York last year"	Past Perfect Simple He said that he had visited New York the previous year.
Present Perfect He said: "I've lived here for a long time "	Past Perfect He said that he had lived there for a long time
Past Perfect He said: "They had finished the work when I arrived "	Past Perfect He said that they had finished the work when he had arrived "
Past Progressive He said: "I was playing football when the accident occurred "	Past Perfect Progressive He said that he had been playing football when the accident had occurred
Present Perfect Progressive He said: "I have been playing football for two hours."	Past Perfect Progressive He said that he had been playing football for two hours

Past Perfect Progressive He said: "I had been reading a newspaper when the light went off "	Past Perfect Progressive He said that he had been reading a newspaper when the light had gone off
Future Simple (will+verb) He said: "I will open the door."	Conditional (would+verb) He said that he would open the door.
Conditional (would+verb) He said: "I would buy Mercedes if I were rich "	Conditional (would+verb) He said that he would buy Mercedes if he had been rich "

The verbs *could, should, would, might, must, needn't, ought to, used to* do not normally change.

Example:

He said, "She might be right." – He said that she might be right.

Other Changes

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Time Expressions	
today	that day
now	then
yesterday	the day before
... days ago	... days before
last week	the week before
next year	the following year
tomorrow	the next day / the following day
Place	
here	there
Demonstratives	
this	that
these	those

Reporting Questions

- transform the question into an indirect question
- use the question word (*where, when, what, how*) or *if / whether*

Types of questions	Direct speech	Reported speech
With question word (what, why, where, how...)	"Why" don't you speak English?"	He asked me why I didn't speak English.
Without question word (yes or no questions)	"Do you speak English?"	He asked me whether / if I spoke English.

Reporting requests / commands

When transforming requests and commands, check whether you have to change:

- pronouns
- place and time expressions

Direct speech	Reported speech
"Nancy, do the exercise."	He told Nancy to do the exercise.
"Nancy, give me your pen, please."	He asked Nancy to give him her pen.

- Tenses are not relevant for requests and commands– simply use *to* / *not to* + verb (infinitive without "to")
- For affirmative use *to* + infinitive (without to)
- For negative requests, use *not to* + infinitive (without to).

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