**REPORTED SPEECH**

In this chapter, you will:

* Learn about types of reporting verbs used in English Language
* Learn how to use and apply Reporting Verbs in academic texts

**Direct Speech**

When we report a speaker’s word exactly, we call this ‘direct speech’. We write the speaker’s words between speech marks (“….”).

e.g: The Manager said, “There has to be more co-ordination between departments.”

**Reported Speech**

‘Reported speech’ is different from direct speech because we do not copy the speaker’s word exactly. Instead, we report the speaker’s idea as part of our own sentence. We usually change the speaker’s words into a subordinate clause beginning with **that**.

Direct speech: ‘You need an operation.’

Reported speech: The doctor said that I needed an operation

Main sentence subordinate ‘reported clause’

In informal English we leave out ‘that’:

The doctor said I needed an operation

**Task 1**

Rewrite these direct speech sentences as reported speech. You do not need to change any verb tenses.

1. The report states, ‘the committee can hold office for only one year.’

* The report states that the committee can hold office for only one year.

1. The residents are not civic-minded,’ said the councilor.

* The councilor said that the residents are not civic-minded.

1. ‘There is no gold in Pekan,’ said the old man. (informal)

* The old main said there is no gold in Pekan.

1. The witness said, ‘The man with the mole stole the wallet.’

* The witness said that the man with the mole stole the wallet.

1. The teachers complained, ‘This year’s students are not serious enough.’

* The teachers complained that this year’s students are not serious enough.

1. Neela said, ‘Jeha always fooled around in class.’ (informal)

* Neela said Jeha always fooled around in class.

**Verb Tenses in reported speech: the reporting verb.**

We normally report what someone said in the past. Therefore the reporting verb is usually in the simple past tense.

I **told** the tourist that there was a hotel nearby.

Reporting verb

However, we sometimes need a present tense reporting verb.

* When reporting what is said in written texts, e.g. literature and law:
  + The law **states** that drug traffickers will be hanged.
* When reporting generally held views:
  + Consumers **complain** that inflation is uncontrolled.
* When we want to suggest that the speaker’s opinion hasn’t changed:
  + Sara **says** she wasn’t at the scene of the murder. (and if you asked Sara now, she would still say the same thing)

**Direct Speech and Reported speech**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Language item | Change |
| Present simple changes to past simple | *I am in London He said he was in London* |
| Past simple, present perfect and past perfect all come out as past perfect | *I was in France She said she had been in France I have been to France She said she had been to France I had been to France She said she had been to France* |
| Present progressive changes to past progressive | *I am writing to them He said he was writing to them.* |
| Future 'will' changes to 'would' | *I'll go later He said he'd go later* |
| Future 'will be'+ ing changes to 'would be' + -ing | *I'll be seeing him tomorrow She said she'd be seeing him tomorrow* |
| Future 'will have' + past participle changes to 'would have' + past participle | *I'll have done it He said he would have done it* |
| Other changes | |
| Pronouns change as appropriate | *I / We / want to be there I / He / She / We / They said I / she / he / we / they wanted to be there* |
| Time and place expressions change as appropriate | *I like it here She said she liked it there I am going tomorrow He said he was going the next day* |
| Modal auxiliary verbs change to their 'past' equivalents if there is one | *I may see him He said he might see him I must go now He said he had to go then* |

In academic writing, it is important to present an argument logically and cohesively. You may be required to:

* comment on someone’s work
* agree or disagree with someone else’s study
* evaluate someone’s ideas

It is repetitive and boring to write ‘Smith says...’ over and over again. Fortunately, there is a wide choice of reporting verbs in English.

In an academic context, the present tense is used to report what someone said or wrote, or what they believe. Reporting opinions and ideas usually follows a simple sentence structure.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Subject | **Verb** | Object |
| I | **would say** | (that) university education should be subsidized. |
| Some people | **think** | (that) education should be the main priority. |
| The government | **Believes** | that universities should focus on science. |
| McKinsky (2012) | **argues** | that access to education should be universal. |
| Shakespeare | **Seems to suggest** | That people are often not in control of their actions. |

There are many reporting verbs, including: state, suggest, propose, consider. Check on your dictionary to see how each verb is used.

**Task 2**

Read the summary below and circle the verbs used to report the discussion.

|  |
| --- |
| The discussion focused on education as priority for government spending. Some of the participants think that education is the most top priority for governments. Other people believe that things like health and transport are equally important. One view is that the government should cut university courses such as media studies and history, because these do not help the economy. The main reasons for not cutting education are that you need education to produce important professionals such as doctors, teachers, and engineers. One participant argues that if the government cut education there would be problems in the future. Overall, there was no final agreement. |

Reporting verbs, also known as referring verbs, are verbs which are used when you report or refer to another writer's work. They are needed to connect the [in-text citation](https://www.eapfoundation.com/writing/references/citation/) to the information which you are citing. See the following examples, in which the reporting verbs (*point out* and *state*) are shown in bold.

* Sharpling (2012) **points out** that reporting verbs have subtle differences in meaning.
* University of Adelaide (2014) **states** that using the same reporting verb all the time is both repetitive and boring.

**Introducing citations reporting verbs, it and there structures, nouns.**

In academic writing, there are several ways to introduce citations. Reporting verbs like argue and suggest are frequently used:

* Using a verb in the active form. This puts the focus on the original author:
  + **Truswell (2003, p.39) argues that** there is no strong reason why a vegetarian diet should be deficient in vitamin B12, but vegan are ‘at risk’ of B12 deficiency, as well as the essential mineral calcium.
* Using an impersonal it structure with the verb in the passive form. This shift the focus to the content rather than the author:
  + **It has been argued that** there is no strong reason why a vegetarian diet should be deficient in vitamin B12, but vegan are ‘at risk’ of B12 deficiency, as well as the essential mineral calcium (Truswell, 2003, p.39).
* Using structure based on the noun form of the reporting verb, introduced by *There is* or *There has been*. This also put focus on the content rather than the author:
  + **There has been considerable argument** about vitamin B12 deficiency in vegetarian diets, Truswell (2003, p.39) stating that there is no strong reason why a vegetarian diet should be deficient in vitamin B12, but vegan are ‘at risk’ of B12 deficiency, as well as the essential mineral calcium.

Note that the present simple or the present perfect tense tend to be used to report the ideas of others, regardless of when they lived.

**Task 3**

Complete the table with the reporting verbs below according to similarity of meaning.

Discuss state indicate point out speculate on highlight believe stress feel argue demonstrate illustrate

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Say | Talk about | Think | Emphasize | Show | Suggest |
| state | discuss | feel | indicate | demonstrate | speculate on |
|  | argue | believe | highlight | illustrate |  |
|  |  |  | stress | point out |  |

Task 4

Use the reporting verb *emphasize* in its correct form to complete sentences 1-4.

1. It has been highlighted that a vegetarian diet can have important health benefits.
2. Geissler and Powers (2011) highlight That age is an important factor in vegan diet.
3. A number of researchers indicate that the importance of a balanced diet nutritionals intake in vegetarians.
4. Langley (1995, p.18) highlights how a vegan diet is healthier than a meat-based diet.

#### **What are the different reporting verbs that can be used?**

Reporting verbs differ in terms of their strength; for example, 'to suggest' is much weaker, and more tentative, than 'to argue'. The two verbs convey very different pictures about how the author you are studying sees his or her materials and research.

Some reporting verbs are used principally to say what the writer does and does not do. These verbs do not indicate any value judgement on the part of the writer; they are called 'neutral' reporting verbs.

A second group of verbs is used to show when the writer has an inclination to believe something but still wishes to be hesitant; we call these 'tentative' reporting verbs.

Finally, if the writer has strong arguments to put forward and is absolutely sure of his or her ground, we can use 'strong' reporting verbs to refer to these ideas.

Obviously, it is important (when we read) to ensure that we **interpret** the writer's ideas correctly. For instance, if we say 'Jones (1999) argues' rather than 'Jones (1999) suggests', this is a major difference of meaning. The first indicates strength, the second tentativity. It is very important, in academic writing, not to misinterpret a writer's intentions when we are reporting them.

In the table below, the main reporting verbs in English are classified in terms of their function, and their strength.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Function and strength**  **NEUTRAL**: verbs used to say what the writer describes in factual terms, demonstrates, refers to, and discusses, and verbs used to explain his/her methodology. | **Example verbs**  describe, show, reveal, study, demonstrate, note, point out, indicate, report, observe, assume, take into consideration, examine, go on to say that, state, believe (unless this is a strong belief), mention, etc. |
| **Function and strength**  **TENTATIVE**: verbs used to say what the writer suggests or speculates on (without being absolutely certain). | **Example verbs**  suggest, propose, recommend, question the view that, etc. |
| **Function and strength**  **STRONG**: verbs used to say what the writer makes strong arguments and claims for. | **Example verbs**  Criticize, argue, claim, maintain, support the view that, deny, reject, challenge, strongly believe that, counter the view/argument that, etc. |

Bottom of Form

**What are some of the main language points that need to be considered when using reporting verbs?**

* The structure of sentences when using reporting verbs can vary, and can be flexible; for example:

e.g.

* Jones (1999) argues, in his study of thermodynamics, that...
* As Jones (1999) argues in his study of thermodynamics,...
* In his study of thermodynamics, Jones (1999) argues that...
* It is possible (and often quite attractive stylistically) to invert the subject and verb when reporting:

e.g.

* Thermodynamics, argues Jones (1999), is..
* Reporting the work of others often needs an extra sentence introduction or 'lead-in':

e.g.

* **In considering Smith's discussion on thermodynamics**, Jones (1999) argues that ...
* It is important to remember to put the final 's' on the verb when the subject is 'he/she'.
* Very often, in academic writing, reporting takes place in the **present tense**, as in the examples above;this isbecause of the need to bring past research into the present moment.

**Task 5**

Read the excerpt below and answer the following questions using the appropriate reporting verbs.

A recent government initiative in the UK suggest giving individuals £50 vouchers to buy healthy goods at participating outlets. This is perhaps a waste of public money. Harrison (2010,p.025)(1)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that this is not effective use of public funds, as it is open to abuse, for example, supposing people want cash rather than voucher. Johnson (2001) (2)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_such scheme for their short-termism and not dealing with the issue. Perhaps, as Gonzales and Parker(2003) (3)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_a better option would be community involvement, not just individual involvement. If the people around an individual or group like a family or community take action to improve their conditions; an individual is then more likely to follow, as Cooper (2007) (4)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. With proper encouragement and support, this strategy is much more likely to lead a long-term behavior change than the distribution of vouchers.

1. (Strong )
   1. claims
   2. suggest
2. (Strong)
   1. thinks
   2. criticizes
3. (tentative)
   1. propose
   2. state
4. (neutral)
   1. points out
   2. argue