

Reported speech 1 (He said that ...)

A Study this example situation:



You want to tell somebody what Paul said.
There are two ways of doing this:

You can repeat Paul's words (direct speech):
Paul said 'I'm feeling ill.'

Or you can use reported speech:
Paul said **that he was feeling ill.**

Compare:

direct Paul said 'I am feeling ill.'

reported Paul said that **he was** feeling ill.

In writing we use these quotation marks to show direct speech.

B When we use reported speech, the main verb of the sentence is usually past (Paul **said** that ... / I **told** her that ... etc.). The rest of the sentence is usually past too:

- ☐ Paul **said** that he **was** feeling ill.
☐ I **told** Lisa that I **didn't** have any money.

You can leave out **that**. So you can say:

- ☐ Paul **said** that he was feeling ill. or Paul **said** he was feeling ill.

In general, the *present* form in direct speech changes to the *past* form in reported speech:

am/is → **was** do/does → **did** will → **would**
are → **were** have/has → **had** can → **could**
want/like/know/go etc. → **wanted/liked/knew/went** etc.

Compare direct speech and reported speech:

You met Anna. Here are some of the things she said in *direct* speech:

My parents **are** fine.
I'm going to learn to drive.
I **want** to buy a car.
John **has** a new job.
I **can't** come to the party on Friday.
I **don't** have much free time.
I'm going away for a few days.
I'll phone you when I **get** back.



ANNA

Later you tell somebody what Anna said.
You use *reported* speech:

- ☐ Anna said that her parents **were** fine.
☐ She said that she **was** going to learn to drive.
☐ She said that she **wanted** to buy a car.
☐ She said that John **had** a new job.
☐ She said that she **couldn't** come to the party on Friday.
☐ She said she **didn't** have much free time.
☐ She said that she **was** going away for a few days and **would** phone me when she **got** back.

C The *past simple* (**did/saw/knew** etc.) can usually stay the same in reported speech, or you can change it to the *past perfect* (**had done / had seen / had known** etc.):

- ☐ direct Paul said 'I **woke** up feeling ill, so I **didn't** go to work.'
reported Paul said (that) he **woke** up feeling ill, so he **didn't** go to work. or
Paul said (that) he **had woken** up feeling ill, so he **hadn't** gone to work.

Exercises

47.1

Yesterday you met a friend of yours, Steve. You hadn't seen him for a long time. Here are some of the things Steve said to you:

- 1 I'm living in London.
- 2 My father isn't very well.
- 3 Rachel and Mark are getting married next month.
- 4 My sister has had a baby.
- 5 I don't know what Joe is doing.
- 6 I saw Helen at a party in June and she seemed fine.
- 7 I haven't seen Amy recently.
- 8 I'm not enjoying my job very much.
- 9 You can come and stay at my place if you're ever in London.
- 10 My car was stolen a few days ago.
- 11 I want to go on holiday, but I can't afford it.
- 12 I'll tell Chris I saw you.



Steve

Later that day you tell another friend what Steve said. Use reported speech.

1 Steve said that he was living in London.

2 He said that

3 He

4

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12

47.2

Somebody says something to you which is not what you expected. Use your own ideas to complete your answers.

- 1 A: It's quite a long way from the hotel to the station.
B: Is it? The man on the reception desk said it was only five minutes' walk.
- 2 A: Sue is coming to the party tonight.
B: Is she? I saw her a few days ago and she said she
- 3 A: Sarah gets on fine with Paul.
B: Does she? Last week you said each other.
- 4 A: Joe knows lots of people.
B: That's not what he told me. He said anyone.
- 5 A: Jane will be here next week.
B: Oh, really? When I spoke to her, she said away.
- 6 A: I'm going out tonight.
B: Are you? I thought you said home.
- 7 A: John speaks French quite well.
B: Does he? He told me any other languages.
- 8 A: I haven't seen Ben recently.
B: That's strange. He told me last weekend.

Reported speech 2

A It is not always necessary to change the verb in reported speech. If the situation *is still the same*, you do not need to change the verb to the past. For example:

- ☐ **direct** Paul said 'My new job **is** boring.'
reported Paul said that his new job **is** boring.
 (The situation is still the same. His job **is** still boring now.)

- ☐ **direct** Helen said 'I **want** to go to Canada next year.'
reported Helen told me that **she wants** to go to Canada next year.
 (Helen still wants to go to Canada next year.)

You can also change the verb to the past:

- ☐ Paul said that his new job **was** boring.
☐ Helen told me that she **wanted** to go to Canada next year.

But if the situation has changed or finished, you *must* use a past verb:

- ☐ Paul left the room suddenly. He said **he had** to go. (*not has to go*)

B You need to use a past form when there is a difference between what was said and what is really true. For example:

You met Sonia a few days ago.
 She said: **Joe is in hospital.**

Later that day you meet Joe in the street. You say:
 Hi, Joe. I didn't expect to see you. Sonia said you **were** in hospital.
 (*not 'Sonia said you are in hospital', because clearly he is not*)

**C Say and tell**

If you say *who* somebody is talking to, use **tell**:

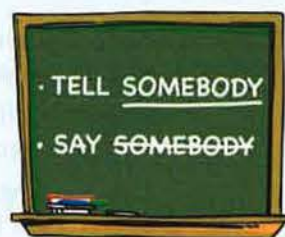
- ☐ Sonia **told me** that you were in hospital. (*not Sonia said me*)
☐ What did you **tell the police**? (*not say the police*)

Otherwise use **say**:

- ☐ Sonia **said** that you were in hospital. (*not Sonia told that ...*)
☐ What did you **say**?

But you can '**say** something **to** somebody':

- ☐ Ann **said** goodbye **to** me and left. (*not Ann said me goodbye*)
☐ What did you **say to** the police?

**D Tell/ask somebody to do something**

We also use the infinitive (**to do / to be** etc.) in reported speech, especially with **tell** and **ask** (for orders and requests):

- ☐ **direct** 'Drink plenty of water,' the doctor said to me.
reported The doctor **told me to drink** plenty of water.
☐ **direct** 'Don't be late,' I said to Joe.
reported I **told Joe not to be** late.
☐ **direct** 'Can you help me, please,' Jackie said to me.
reported Jackie **asked me to help** her.

You can also say 'Somebody **said (not) to** do something':

- ☐ Paul **said not to worry** about him. (*but not Paul said me*)

Exercises

48.1 Here are some things that Sarah said to you:



I've never been to the United States.

I don't have any brothers or sisters.

I can't drive.

I don't like fish.

Jane has a very well-paid job.

I'm working tomorrow evening.

Jane is a friend of mine.

~~Dave is lazy.~~

But later Sarah says something different to you. What do you say?

Sarah

You

- 1 Dave works very hard.
- 2 Let's have fish for dinner.
- 3 I'm going to buy a car.
- 4 Jane is always short of money.
- 5 My sister lives in Paris.
- 6 I think New York is a great place.
- 7 Let's go out tomorrow evening.
- 8 I've never spoken to Jane.

But you said he was lazy.

But

48.2 Complete the sentences with **say** or **tell** (in the correct form). Use only one word each time.

- 1 Ann said goodbye to me and left.
- 2 _____ us about your holiday. Did you have a nice time?
- 3 Don't just stand there! _____ something!
- 4 I wonder where Sue is. She _____ she would be here at 8 o'clock.
- 5 Dan _____ me that he was bored with his job.
- 6 The doctor _____ that I should rest for at least a week.
- 7 Don't _____ anybody what I _____. It's a secret just between us.
- 8 'Did she _____ you what happened?' 'No, she didn't _____ anything to me.'
- 9 Gary couldn't help me. He _____ me to ask Chris.
- 10 Gary couldn't help me. He _____ to ask Chris.

48.3 The following sentences are direct speech:

Don't wait for me if I'm late.

Mind your own business.

Don't worry, Sue.

Please slow down!

Can you open your bag, please?

Could you get me a paper?

~~Hurry up!~~

Will you marry me?

Do you think you could give me a hand, Tom?

Now choose one of these to complete each of the sentences below. Use **reported speech**.

- 1 Will was taking a long time to get ready, so I told him to hurry up.
- 2 Sarah was driving too fast, so I asked _____.
- 3 Sue was nervous about the situation. I told _____.
- 4 I couldn't move the piano alone, so I _____.
- 5 The security guard looked at me suspiciously and _____.
- 6 Tom was going to the shop, so I _____.
- 7 The man started asking me personal questions, so I _____.
- 8 John was in love with Marianne, so he _____.
- 9 I didn't want to delay Helen, so I _____.