

GRAMMAR

Reported speech

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_2122G

LANGUAGE

English

A photograph showing a woman in a light-colored top being interviewed. Several microphones with colorful foam covers (red, green, blue, orange) are held up towards her. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Learning outcomes

- I can identify the main characteristics of reported speech and why we use it.
- I can use reported speech to state what others have said about success in life.

What is reported speech?

The left column shows examples of **direct speech**. The right column shows **reported speech**. What **differences** do you notice between them? **Who** said the sentences under direct speech?

Direct speech	Reported speech
"No one can be successful unless they love their work."	My old boss once told me that no one could be successful unless they loved their work.
"It took the company 20 years to build our reputation and 5 minutes to ruin it."	The CEO said that it had taken the company 20 years to build their reputation and 5 minutes to ruin it.
"The more mistakes you make, the more you'll learn!"	An old manager told us that the more mistakes we made, the more we would learn.



Using reporting verbs

We usually **introduce reported speech** using **reporting verbs**.



My old boss once **told me** that nobody could be successful unless they loved their work first.



The CEO said that it had taken the company 20 years to build their reputation and 5 minutes to ruin it.

- What are the **two reporting verbs** in these sentences? Which **tense** are they in?
- Which reporting verb needs a **direct object**? Which one **doesn't** need a direct object?





Comparing *say* and *tell*

Choose the correct verb to complete the sentences.

1 My mother always used to _____ me that practice made perfect.

a. say

b. tell

2 Our boss once _____ that our success was just as important as our failures.

a. said

b. told

3 A colleague of ours loved to _____ us that there was no I in team!

a. say

b. tell



Rules for reported speech

Transform the statement into reported speech and **complete** the exercises below.

"Nobody **can** be successful unless they **love** their work first."



My old boss once told me that nobody _____ be successful unless they _____ their work first.

Exercise 1

Complete the gaps

- We change the verb forms as follows:
- **can** → _____
- **love** → _____

Exercise 2

Answer the question

- Normally, the tense in reported speech is **one tense** back from the tense in direct speech.
- What is one tense back from present simple? Discuss!



Changing tense for reported speech

Complete the list below by **moving** the **tense**, or **specific verb**, one tense back.

1 Present simple



Past simple

2 *Can*



3 *Will*



4 Present continuous

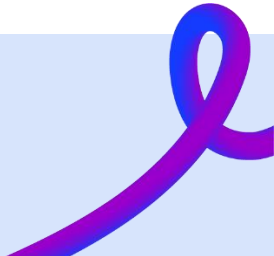


5 Past simple



6 Present perfect





Rules for reported speech

Transform the statement into reported speech and **complete** the exercises below.

"It took the company 20 years to build **our** reputation and 5 minutes to ruin it."



The CEO said it had taken the company 20 years to build _____ reputation and 5 minutes to ruin it.

Exercise 1

Fill in the gap

- When we change direct speech into reported speech, the **pronoun** changes to reflect who is now speaking.
- our** → _____

Exercise 2

Complete sentence

- Direct speech:** 'I've been very successful in my career,' said Mr Briggs.
- Reported speech:** *Mr Briggs said that he had been...*



How about you?

Complete the sentences with your own ideas.

**An old boss of mine
once told me that...**



**My parents always
used to say that...**



Reading

You're going to read a short interview with **Amara Patel**, a successful entrepreneur from India.



1

Look up the word **entrepreneur** in a good online dictionary. What is it?

2

What do you think makes an entrepreneur **successful**?



Reading

Read the interview with Amara and **answer** the questions below.

Interviewer: What has made you so successful as an entrepreneur?

Amara Patel: For me having a mentor helped a lot. My mentor taught me everything I know now. "Always ask for help if you need it!" she used to tell me. I never take myself too seriously, either. Nothing is *that* serious at the end of the day.

Interviewer: What do you think is key to being successful in life?

AP: You have one life to live. I never felt the need to plan out my life and I think that's why I've been so successful. If we plan our lives completely, our minds won't pay attention to what's going on around us. Anything can happen in life. We just need to be open and ready for it when it happens!

Who has helped Amara a lot in her career?

What is something her mentor told her?

What has she never felt the need to do in life?



What did Amara say?

Look at the direct quotes from the interview. **Use** reported speech to report what she said.



"My mentor taught me everything I know now!"

"I never take myself too seriously, either."

"I never felt the need to plan out my life"

"Anything can happen in life!"



Interview a classmate

1. **Choose two** of the questions below. **Note down** your answers to them.
2. **Exchange** answers with a classmate, either in breakout rooms or in the classroom.
3. **Make notes** while your partner is speaking. You'll need your notes for the next activity.

I think the key to success in life is to always...

I agree, but for me it also means...



Questions

- What's been your biggest career success so far?
- Who's an inspiring colleague or manager you've worked with?
- How would your colleagues describe you?
- What other tips do you have for success at work?



What did your classmate say?

Now, **report** back to the class what your partner told you. **Use** your notes to help you!



Christine

John told me
that...

Christine
said that for
her...



John

Their biggest career
success

An inspiring
colleague or
manager

How their
colleagues would
describe them

Other tips for
success at work



End of lesson

Idiom

Spill the beans

Meaning: To reveal secret information unintentionally or indiscreetly.

Example: In the interview, he *spilled the beans* on how terrible their marriage was.



Additional practice

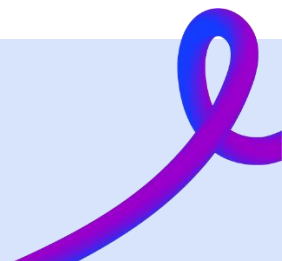


Said or told?



Complete the sentences with the **correct reporting verb**.

- 1 My dad _____ that I should be more careful.
- 2 The policeman _____ Sarah that she was speeding and he would fine her.
- 3 The teacher walked in and _____ her students they were going to have a test.
- 4 A wise man once _____ that life was much more beautiful with friends.
- 5 A man suddenly entered the meeting room and _____ us he was the new boss.



Famous words



Choose two quotes and **report** what each person once said. Which quotes do you like?

1



"In a gentle way, we can shake the world."

- Mahatma Gandhi

2



"The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination."

- Albert Einstein

3



"When you're knocked down, get right back up and never listen to anyone who says you can't or shouldn't go on."

- Hillary Clinton

4



"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

- Maya Angelou



What did they say?

Report what each of these people said. Don't forget to use **a reporting verb**!

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | Your boss: "You need to get up earlier and work harder." | > | My boss told me I needed to get up earlier and work harder.

_____ |
| 2 | Your neighbour: "Your cat has destroyed my plants." | > | _____

_____ |
| 3 | Your friend: "I got a new job today." | > | _____

_____ |
| 4 | The postman: "I don't have any correspondence for you this week." | > | _____

_____ |
| 5 | The politician: "We are discussing different measures to tackle the crisis." | > | _____

_____ |
| 6 | Your Mum: "You have to call me more often." | > | _____

_____ |



Giving and reporting details

Choose a **partner** to work with. Follow the **three steps** to the activity.



Think about
yesterday.

What did you do?

Tell your partner
about it.



Listen to your partner
talking about their
day.

Take notes on what
they say.



Report what your
partner said.

Listen out for
examples of reported
speech!



Answer key

- P.4:** 1. told, said 2. past simple 3. We *say* something, but we *tell* someone something
- P.5:** 1. b 2. a 3. b
- P.6:** could, loved; past
- P.7:** 2. *could*; 3. *would* 4. past continuous 5. past perfect 6. past perfect
- P.8:** *their; he had been very successful in **his** career.*
- P.10:** An entrepreneur is someone who makes money by starting or running their own business.
- P.11:** 1. Amara says her mentor has helped her a lot in her career.
2. Amara's mentor told her to always ask for help when she needed it.
3. She thinks she's been so successful as she never felt the need to plan out her life.
- P.12** **Suggested answers:**
Amara said that her mentor had taught her everything that she knew now.
Amara said that she never took herself too seriously either.
Amara said that she had never felt the need to plan out her life.
Amara said that anything could happen in life.



Answer key

P.18: 1. said 2. told 3. told 4. said 5. told

P.20: 1. The neighbour said my cat had destroyed his plants.
2. My friend told me he had got a new job.
3. The postman told me he didn't have any correspondence for me that week.
4. The politician said they were tackling different measures to tackle the crisis.
5. My mum told me I had to call her more often.



Summary

- We use **reported speech** to tell someone what someone else has said or told us in the past.
- We can also call it **indirect speech** to compare it with **direct speech**.

- We usually introduce reported speech with **said** or **told**.
 - **told** requires an indirect object, **said** does not.
 - This means, we *said* something but we *told* someone something

- We change the verbs forms in the reported words by shifting them back one tense:
 - *I **want** to be successful* > *He said that he **wanted** to be successful!*
 - *I'**m** **working** hard!* > *She told me that she **was working** hard!*
 - *I **will** always ask you for help!* > *He said that he **would** always ask me for help!*

- We may also need to change the pronouns and possessives in reported speech:
 - *That was the secret to **my** success!* > *She said that had been the secret to **her** success!*
 - ***My** manager helped **me** a lot!* > *He said that **his** manager had helped **him** a lot!*



Vocabulary

entrepreneur

