

Reported speech (indirect speech)

When do we use reported speech (indirect speech)?

Sometimes someone says a sentence, for example, "I am going to the cinema tonight". Later, maybe we want to tell someone else what the first person said.

In such circumstances, we have two options as under.

Option 1.- To use direct speech and mention person's exact words-in quotation
e.g.- He said "I am going to the cinema tonight".

Option 2.-To use indirect speech and mould the statement in our words
e.g.- He said (that), he was going the cinema the previous night

1.Reported statements

We use a 'reporting verb' like 'say' or 'tell' in reported statements. If this verb is in the present tense, it's easy. We just put 'she says' and then the sentence:

- Direct speech: "I like ice cream".
- Reported speech: She **says** she **likes** ice cream.

We don't need to change the tense. However, we need to do logical changes of pronouns such as from 'I' to 'she' and also words like 'my' and 'your'.

Omitting **That** - When we report a statement, we can say "He said **that**..." or simply "He said...". Both are possible. "He said that..." is more formal.

In the following sentences, we can happily omit (or keep) **that**.

↳ Mona knew [that] she was about to be fired.

reported speech

However, sometimes omitting **that** creates a break in flow of a sentence. The problem is, ~~that~~ production in her department has dropped.

As a general rule, if the sentence feels just as good without **that** if no ambiguity results from its omission, if the sentence is more efficient or elegant without it, then we can safely omit **that**.

A-Pronoun

Direct Speech	Reported (indirect) Speech
I, you	he, she, it
my, mine, your, yours	his, her, hers, its
we	they
our, ours	their, theirs
us	them

2.Back-shifting

We sometimes change the tense of the **reported** clause by moving it **back** one tense. For example, the **present simple** goes back one tense to **past simple**. We call this change "**back-shifting**".

When do we use back-shifting?

We use back-shifting when it is **logical**. So, for example, if *two minutes ago* Tushar said "I am hungry" and I am now telling his sister, I might NOT use back-shifting (because Tushar is still hungry):

Here I will say- Tushar just said that he **is** hungry.

But if *yesterday* Tushar said "I am hungry" and I am now telling his sister, I would use back-shifting:

- Yesterday, Tushar said that he **was** hungry.
[*assuming Tushar has eaten since yesterday*]

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So we use back-shifting **SOMETIMES** but not always. Look the examples for better understanding. **WHEN** we use back-shifting, here's how it works with these common tenses and modals:

Back-shifting		
present simple	→	past simple
present continuous	→	past continuous
present perfect	→	past perfect
past simple	→	past perfect
past continuous	→	past perfect continuous
can	→	could
may		might
will		would
shall		should

We **NEVER** use back-shifting when the original words are:

- past perfect, could, might, would, should

Remember:

- If a situation is *still true*, back-shifting is **optional**.
- For a *general truth*, there is **no need** for back-shifting

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Look at the following examples. See if you can understand when and why they use back-shifting:

Tenses and Modals	Direct speech	Reported speech
Present simple*	He said, "I like coffee."	He said (that) he likes coffee.
		He said (that) he liked coffee.
Present continuous*	She said, "Tinu is living here with us."	She said Tinu is living there with them.
		She said Tinu was living there with them.
Present perfect	She said, "I haven't seen Julie"	She said she hadn't seen Julie.
Present perfect continuous	He said, 'I've been writing poetry.'	He told me he had been writing poetry
Simple past	She said, "I bought a car"	She said she bought a car.
	They said, 'He was at home with us.'	They said he had been at home with them.
Past continuous	Samir said, "Were you watching TV when I called."	Samir asked if I had been watching TV when he called.
	She said, "I was walking along the street"	She said she had been walking along the street.
Past perfect**	She said "I had taken English lessons before"	She said she had taken English lessons before.
	She said 'I found him in the garden, where he had been waiting all night.'	She said she had found him in the garden, where he had been waiting all night.
* if still true, change is optional / ** never changes		

reported speech		
Tenses & Modals	Direct speech	Reported speech
Can*	She said, “I can speak English”	She said she could speak English.
		She said she can not speak English
Could**	She said “I could swim when I was four”	She said she could swim when she was four.
	He said, "Could you swim when you were three?"	He asked me if I could swim when I was three.
May	She said: "I may be late."	She said she may be late.
		She said she might be late
Might**	She said "I might be late"	She said she might be late
Will*	She said, "I will call you tomorrow."	She said she would call me the next day.
		She said she will call me tomorrow. (tomorrow has not come)
Would**	She said, “I would help, but I am sick	She said she would help but she is sick.
Shall	She said: “I shall come later”	She said she would come later.
	He said: "Shall I open the door?"	He asked if he should open the door.
Should**	She said, “I should call my mother”	She said she should call her mother
must	She said "I must study at the weekend"	She said she must study at the weekend (OR) She said she had to study at the weekend
	Manoj said, "I must find a job next year."	Manoj said he must find a job next year. (next year hasn't come yet)
have to	Shila said: "I have to do my homework."	Shila said she had to do her
		Shila says she has to do her
* if still true, change is optional / ** never changes		

3. Time and Place

When we report something, we may need to make changes to:

- time (*now, tomorrow*) & place (*here, this room*)

Direct speech	Reported speech
She said, "I saw Sonal yesterday."	She said she had seen Sonal the day before.
He said: "My mother is here."	He said that his mother was there.

If we report something around the same time, then we probably do not need to make any changes to **time words**. But if we report something at a different time, we need to change time words. Look at examples:

- Direct speech- He said: "It was hot **yesterday**."
- In Direct speech- He said that it had been hot **the day before**.
- He said: "We are going to swim **tomorrow**."
- He said they were going to swim **the next day**.

Place words

If we are in the same place when we report something, then we do not need to make any changes to the **place words**. But if we are in a different place when we report something, then we need to change the place words. Look at these examples:

- He said: "It is cold in **here**." → He said that it was cold in **there**.
- He said: "How much is **this book**?" → He asked how much **the book** was.

Here are some common place words, showing how you change them for reported speech:

here	there
this / it	that
these	those

reported speech

Here is a list of common time words, showing how you change them for reported speech:

Direct Speech	Indirect Speech (Reported Speech)
now	then / at that time
today	yesterday / that day / Tuesday / the 27th of June
tonight	that night / last night, on Sunday night
yesterday	the day before yesterday / the previous day / on Wednesday / the 5 th of December
tomorrow	today / the next day/the following day/ on Friday
the day before yesterday	two days before
the day after tomorrow	in two days
last week / month / year	the previous week / month / year
next week/month / year	the following week / month / year,
this week	that week, last week
last night	the night before / the previous night, on Sunday night
two minutes ago	two minutes before
in one hour	one hour later

4. Reported Questions

We usually introduce reported questions with the verb "ask":

- He **asked** (me) **if/whether...** (YES/NO questions)
- He **asked** (me) **why/when/where/what/how...** (question-word questions)

But we also need to change the **word order**. After we report a question, it is no longer a question (and in writing, there is no question mark). The word order is like that of a normal statement (subject-verb-object).

YES/NO questions-

We introduce reported YES/NO questions with **ask + if**:

direct question	She said,	"Do you like coffee?"
reported question	She asked	if I liked coffee.

Note that in the above example the reported question has no auxiliary "do". But there is pronoun change and back-shifting.

Note that we sometimes use "whether" instead of "if". The meaning is the same. "Whether" is a little more formal and more usual in writing:

- They asked us **if** we wanted lunch.
- They asked us **whether** we wanted lunch.

We introduce reported question with **ask + question word**:

direct question	He said,	"Where	do you live?"
reported question	He asked me	where	I lived.

Remember that there are basically three types of question:

- YES/NO questions: Do you want tea?
- Question Word questions: Where did you drink tea?
- Choice questions: Do you prefer tea or coffee?

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Reported choice questions- Was the tea cold? Where is my tea?

Look at these examples:

YES/NO questions	
Direct question	Reported question
I said: "Can I help you?"	I asked if I could help her.
She said to us: "Did you feel cold?"	She asked if we had felt cold.
He said: "Are your hands cold?"	He asked whether my hands were cold.

Question-Word questions	
Direct question	Reported question
He said: "Where are you going?"	He asked me where I was going.
He said: "Why didn't you say something?"	He asked me why I hadn't said anything.
He said: "When will they come?"	He asked when they would come.
Avatar?" He said: "Who has seen	He asked me who had seen Avatar.
He said: "How much might it cost?"	He asked me how much it might cost.
She said to me: "Where is the station?"	She asked me where the station was.

Choice questions	
Direct question	Reported question
He asked, "Do you want tea or coffee?"	He asked whether I wanted tea or coffee.
He said, "Is the car new or second-hand?"	He asked whether the car was new or second-hand.

5. Reported Requests

A request is when somebody asks you to do something-usually politely.

She said: " Could you open the window, please? "	She asked me to open the window.
He said: " Please don't smoke. "	He asked them not to smoke.

We usually introduce reported requests with the verb "ask".

ask	+	noun/pronoun	+	to infinitive
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- We **asked** the man to help us. / They **asked** us to wait.

As we use the infinitive there is no need to worry about tense. But as with reported statements and reported questions, we may need to change **pronouns** as well as **time** and **place** in reported requests. Examples:

Direct request	Reported request
I said politely, "Please make less noise."	I asked them politely to make less noise.
She has often said to me, "Could you stay the night?"	She has often asked me to stay the night.
They said to the architect: "We'd like you to meet us here tomorrow."	They asked the architect to meet them there the next day.
She will certainly say to John, "Please stay for lunch."	She will certainly ask John to stay for lunch.
She always says, "Please don't forget me."	She always asks me not to forget her.
"Close the window, please"	She asked me to close the window.
"Please help me".	She asked me to help her.
"Please don't smoke".	She asked me not to smoke.
"Could you bring my book tonight?"	She asked me to bring her book that night.
"Could you pass the milk, please?"	She asked me to pass the milk.

6. Reported Orders

An order is when somebody tells you to do something and you have no choice. It is not usually polite. It is a "command".

Direct order	Reported order
She said: " Stop! "	She told him to stop .

We usually introduce reported orders with the verb "tell".

tell	+	noun	+	to infinitive
		pronoun		

- We **told** the man not to smoke.
- The policeman **told** us to follow him.

Because we use the infinitive there is no need to worry about tense. But as with reported statements and reported requests, we may need to change **pronouns** as well as **time** and **place** in reported orders.

Here are some examples:

Direct order	Reported order
She said, "Eat your food now!"	She told the boy to eat his food right then.
The policeman said: "Get out !"	The policeman instructed us to get out
She said, "You must make the bed before you go to work!"	She told her husband to make the bed before he went to work.
The doctor said: "Don't smoke in here!"	The doctor told them not to smoke in there.

No tense change

There are some cases when the tense shift is not necessary, even if the reporting verb is in past tense.

a) When talking about something permanent, a tense shift is not necessary:

- ‘I **live** on baked beans.’
- He **said** he **lives/lived** on baked beans.

b) When talking about general truths: Universal truth, sayings, proverbs, etc.

- ‘The ocean **is** God’s smile.’
- Someone **said** that the ocean **is** God’s smile.

c) If the *that* clause refers to an action that is still future at the moment of speaking.

- ‘Rates **will** remain unchanged in the next few years.’
- The bank **announced** yesterday that rates **will** remain unchanged in the next few years.

Conditionals

We can report conditional sentences in the following ways.

a) The first conditional shifts back to second conditional:

- ‘If I **have** the time, I **will/may** call you.’
- She **said** that **if** she **had** the time she **would/might** call me.

b) The third conditional does not shift back either:

- ‘I **would have fallen if I had not caught his arm.**’
- She **said** she **would have fallen** if she **had not caught** his arm.

c) Verbs used in clause expressing impossible condition remain unchanged.

- He said, “If won the election I would become a minister.”
- He said that if he won the election he would become a minister.