



Say and tell

Lesson code: FNFP-1MA4-I4I

INTERMEDIATE

1 Presentation

Study the differences between 'say' and 'tell':

Verb	Use
Say	<p>We use say when we speak in general about what someone said.</p> <p>John said that he arrived yesterday.</p> <p>My friend says that I talk too much.</p> <p>The president said, "We will not increase taxes."</p> <p>We also use say for other forms of communication:</p> <p>The newspapers say that the economic situation is changing.</p> <p>The book says that sugar is bad for you.</p> <p>IMPORTANT: Say cannot be followed by a direct personal object. In other words, we cannot *say somebody something*. However, we can say something to somebody, for example:</p> <p>He said hello to me.</p>
Tell	<p>We use tell when we speak about what someone said to another person.</p> <p>John told me that he arrived yesterday.</p> <p>My friend tells me that I talk too much.</p> <p>Tell is often used with an object + infinitive to express orders, instructions, requests and advice:</p> <p>He told me to be quiet.</p> <p>She told her son not to talk to strangers.</p> <p>IMPORTANT: When we use tell in this way, it is always followed by a direct personal object. In other words, we cannot *tell something*. We can only tell somebody something.</p>

Dialogue

A: I'm **telling** you -- the match starts at 8pm.

B: You **didn't say** that yesterday.



2 Practice 1

Complete the dialogue using 'say' or 'tell' in the correct form.



Tom: Did you meet Sam yesterday?

Kate: Yes, I did.

Tom: What did he _____ ¹ ?

Kate: He _____ ² me that he can't join us this weekend.

Tom: Really? Why not?

Kate: Well, he _____ ³ that he had a lot of work to do. And he had some other problems.

Tom: What kind of problems?

Kate: He _____ ⁴ me not to _____ ⁵ anyone.

Tom: Can't you _____ ⁶ me?

Kate: Sorry, I can't _____ ⁷ anything to anyone.

Tom: I see. So what did you _____ ⁸ ?

Kate: I _____ ⁹ him that it's not a problem. I _____ ¹⁰ that we would organise another trip later this year.

3 Practice 2

Complete the sentences below with 'say' or 'tell' in the correct form.

1. I _____ him to be quiet, but he didn't listen.
2. Can you _____ me how to get to the station?
3. I didn't hear that. Can you _____ it again?
4. I can't hear her. What _____ ?
5. He _____ something to me, but I didn't understand.
6. Your secret is safe with me. I _____ anyone!
7. Didn't I _____ you to get here on time?
8. Doctors _____ that too much cholesterol is bad for us.
9. What do scientists _____ about global warming?
10. Does the article _____ us that dark chocolate is good for our health?
11. The weather forecast _____ that it will rain all week.
12. The latest research _____ us that people are spending more time at home.



4 Special expressions with 'say' and 'tell'

'Say' and 'tell' are also used in special expressions. Study the table below.

Expressions with 'say'	Expressions with 'tell'
say sorry (= apologize) Look what you've done! Say sorry!	tell the time Can you tell the time in Spanish?
say something / nothing / anything Don't just stand there. Say something!	tell the truth / a lie Don't trust Adrian. He never tells the truth . Don't trust Adrian. He only tells lies .
say a word I'm not going to say a word!	tell a story She tells interesting stories .
say hello / good morning / goodbye In my country, you should say hello when you enter a shop.	tell the difference (= notice the difference) I can't tell the difference between Coca Cola and Pepsi.
say your prayers He said his prayers before going to bed.	tell a joke Kim is always telling jokes .

5 Practice 3

Complete the sentences below with 'say' or 'tell' in the correct form.

- Jerry is a comedian. He's good at _____ ing jokes.
- Brian is very honest. He never _____ lies.
- The student had nothing to _____, so he remained silent.
- It was getting late so I _____ goodbye and went home.
- Joe has travelled all around the world. He has lots of fascinating stories to _____.
- Mark and Kevin are identical twins. You can't _____ the difference between them.
- I don't need a watch to _____ the time. I have my smartphone.
- She _____ something interesting, but I forgot what it was.
- Don't _____ a word without your lawyer.
- Just _____ the truth for once!
- The mistake was my fault, so I had to _____ sorry.
- Muslims _____ their prayers five times a day.



2 Practice 1

1. say
2. told
3. said
4. told
5. tell
6. tell
7. say
8. say
9. told
10. said

3 Practice 2

1. told
2. tell
3. say
4. is she saying
5. said
6. won't tell
7. tell
8. say
9. say
10. tell
11. says
12. tells

5 Practice 3

1. tell
2. tells
3. say
4. said
5. tell
6. tell
7. tell
8. said
9. say
10. tell
11. say
12. say

