

Reported speech

Reporting statements

REPORTED SPEECH (also called INDIRECT SPEECH) is the term used for the words that are used to report what someone has said or thought.

If the reporting verb (**say, ask, etc.**) is in the present or present perfect, then the tense of the sentence does not change:

- ▶ *'I'm going home.'*
- ▶ *He says he's going home.*
- ▶ *He's just told me he's going home.*

Reporting statements in the past

When you report somebody's words using **said, asked, etc.**, you usually change the tense to one further back in the past:

(present simple)	<i>'I don't know whether Jane wants to come.'</i>
(past simple)	<i>He said he didn't know whether Jane wanted to come.</i>
(present progressive)	<i>'She is thinking of staying at home tomorrow.'</i>
(past progressive)	<i>He said she was thinking of staying at home the following day.</i>
(present perfect)	<i>'Have you booked your ticket?'</i>
(past perfect)	<i>She asked whether he had booked his ticket.</i>
(past simple)	<i>'I finished my exams yesterday.'</i>
(past perfect)	<i>He said he had finished his exams the day before.</i>
(will)	<i>'I'll ring from the station.'</i>
(would)	<i>He promised he would ring from the station.</i>
(can)	<i>'I can't speak Portuguese.'</i>
(could)	<i>She admitted she couldn't speak Portuguese.</i>

The modal verbs **should, would, might, could, must** and **ought to** are not usually changed:

- ▶ *'We **might** go to the cinema.'*
- ▶ *They said they **might** go to the cinema.*

NOTE It may also be necessary to change other words in the sentence to show that the point of view has changed:

- ▶ *'I'll do it **myself**.'*
*He said that he would do it **himself**.*
- ▶ *'We're going home **tomorrow**.'*
*He said that they were going home **the next day**.*
- ▶ *'I don't like **these** pears.'*
*She said that she didn't like **those** pears.*
- ▶ *'We love living **here**.'*
*They said that they loved living **there**.*
- ▶ *'You can **come** whenever you like.'*
*She told me I could **go** whenever I liked.*

Reporting questions

The word order in reported questions is the same as that in a normal statement, not as in a question, and there is no question mark.

You use **if** or **whether** to report yes/no questions:

- ▶ *'Are you ready?'*
- ▶ *She asked **if/whether** I was ready.*

With **wh-** questions, the **wh-** word stays in the sentence:

- ▶ *'When are you leaving?'*
- ▶ *She asked me **when** I was leaving.*

→ For more information about reported questions, look at the entry for **IF**.

Reporting requests and commands

When you report a request or an order, you usually use a **to-infinitive**:

- ▶ *'Will you open the window please?'*
- ▶ *She asked me **to open** the window.*
- ▶ *'Don't eat all the chocolate!'*
- ▶ *She told the children **not to eat** all the chocolate.*