

# Reported Speech

## Reported Statements

We use a 'reporting verb' like 'say' or 'tell'.

In reported statements, we can use either 'say' or 'tell'. The meaning is the same, but the grammar is different. For example:

| DIRECT SPEECH        | REPORTED SPEECH  |
|----------------------|--|
| John: "I'll be late" | John <b>said</b> (that) he would be late.<br>OR<br>John <b>told me</b> (that) he would be late.* |

*\*John said me that he would be late.*

*John told that he would be late.*

If the reporting verb is in the **present tense**, we just put 'she says' and then the sentence:

Direct speech: He says: "I like ice cream."

Reported speech: He says (that) he likes ice cream.

If the reporting verb is in the **past tense**, then usually we change the tenses in the reported speech:

| TENSE              | DIRECT SPEECH   | REPORTED SPEECH  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| present simple     | She said : "I <b>like</b> ice cream"                  | She said (that) she <b>liked</b> ice cream.  |
| present continuous | She said: "I <b>am living</b> in London"              | She said (that) she <b>was living</b> in London.   |
| past simple        | She said: "I <b>bought</b> a car"                     | She said (that) she <b>had bought</b> a car OR She said (that) she <b>bought</b> a car.                  |
| past continuous    | She said: "I <b>was walking</b> along the street"     | She said (that) she <b>had been walking</b> along the street.  |
| present perfect    | She said: "I <b>haven't seen</b> Julie"               | She said (that) she <b>hadn't seen</b> Julie.  |
| past perfect*      | She said: "I <b>had taken</b> English lessons before" | She said (that) she <b>had taken</b> English lessons before.   |
| will               | She said: "I <b>will</b> see you later"               | She said (that) she <b>would</b> see me later.   |
| would*             | She said: "I <b>would</b> help, but..."               | She said (that) she <b>would</b> help but...   |
| can                | She said: "I <b>can speak</b> perfect English"        | She said (that) she <b>could speak</b> perfect English.  |
| could*             | She said: "I <b>could swim</b> when I was four"       | She said (that) she <b>could swim</b> when she was four.   |
| shall              | She said: "I <b>shall</b> come later"                 | She said (that) she <b>would</b> come later.   |
| might*             | She said: "I <b>might</b> be late"                    | She said (that) she <b>might</b> be late   |
| must               | She said: "I <b>must study</b> at the weekend"        | She said (that) she <b>must study</b> at the weekend OR She said she <b>had to study</b> at the weekend. |

\* *doesn't change*

Occasionally, **we don't need to change** the present tense into the past **if the information in direct speech is still true** (but this is only for things which are general facts, and even then usually we like to change the tense):

Direct speech: She said: "The sky is blue."

Reported speech: She said (that) the sky is/was blue.

## Reported Questions

The tense changes are the same, and we keep the question word. But it isn't a question any more. So we need to change the grammar to a normal positive sentence.

| DIRECT SPEECH (WH questions)                        | REPORTED SPEECH                               |
|---|---|
| She said: "Where do you live?"                      | She asked me where I lived.                   |
| She said to me: "Where is the Post Office, please?" | She asked me where the Post Office was.       |
| She said: "What are you doing?"                     | She asked me what I was doing.                |
| She said: "Who was that fantastic man?"             | She asked me who that fantastic man had been. |

| DIRECT SPEECH (Yes/No questions)         | REPORTED SPEECH  |
|--|--|
| She said: "Do you love me?"              | She asked me <b>if</b> I loved her.                              |
| He said: "Have you ever been to Mexico?" | She asked me <b>if</b> I had ever been to Mexico.                |
| She said: "Are you living here?"         | She asked me <b>if</b> I was living <b>here</b> / <b>there</b> . |

## Reported requests

| DIRECT SPEECH (Requests)                          | REPORTED SPEECH                                   |
|---|---|
| She said: "Please help me."                       | She <b>asked</b> me <b>to help</b> her.           |
| She said: "Please don't smoke."                   | She asked me <b>not to smoke</b> .                |
| She said: "Could you bring my book tonight?"      | She asked me <b>to bring</b> her book that night. |
| She said: "Could you pass the milk, please?"      | She asked me <b>to pass</b> the milk.             |
| She said: "Would you mind coming early tomorrow?" | She asked me <b>to come</b> early the next day.   |
| She said: "Please don't be late."                 | She asked us <b>not to be</b> late.               |

## Reported orders

| DIRECT SPEECH (Orders)              | REPORTED SPEECH                                |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| She said to the child: "Go to bed!" | She <b>told</b> the child <b>to go</b> to bed. |
| She said to him: "Don't worry!"     | She told him <b>not to worry</b> .             |
| She said to me: "Be on time!"       | She told me <b>to be</b> on time.              |
| She said to us: "Don't smoke!"      | She told us <b>not to smoke</b> .              |

## Time Expressions with Reported Speech

Sometimes when we change direct speech into reported speech we have to change time expressions too.

Example:

**It's Monday.** Julie says "I'm leaving **today**".

If I tell someone on Monday, I say "Julie said she was leaving **today**".

If I tell someone on Tuesday, I say "Julie said she was leaving **yesterday**".

If I tell someone on Wednesday, I say "Julie said she was leaving **on Monday**".

If I tell someone a month later, I say "Julie said she was leaving **that day**".

| Time expressions | Possible conversions   |
|------------------|--|
| now              | then / at that time  |
| today            | yesterday / that day / Tuesday / on the 27th of June                           |
| yesterday        | the day before yesterday / the day before / Wednesday / on the 5th of December |
| last night       | the night before, Thursday night   |
| last week        | the week before / the previous week  |
| tomorrow         | today / the next day / the following day / Friday                              |
| next week        | next week / the following week   |

Other possible changes:

|      |              |
|------|--------------|
| this | that / this  |
| here | there / here |
|      |              |