

INDIRECT SPEECH

There are two ways of relating what a person has said: direct and indirect. In direct speech we repeat the original speaker's exact words: *He said, 'I have lost my umbrella.'*

In indirect speech we give the exact meaning of a remark or a speech, without necessarily using the speaker's exact words: *He said (that) he had lost his umbrella.*

”**that**” can usually be omitted after say and tell + object. But it should be kept after other verbs: **complain, explain, object, point out, protest** etc.

A When the introductory verb is in a present, present perfect or future tense we can report the direct speech without any change of tense:

PAUL (phoning from the station): I'm trying to get a taxi. ANN (to Mary): Paul says he is trying to get a taxi.

B But indirect speech is usually introduced by a verb in the past tense. Verbs in the direct speech have then to be changed into a corresponding past tense.

Direct Speech	Indirect Speech
Simple present	Simple past
"I always drink coffee", she said	She said that she always drank coffee.
Present continuous	Past continuous
"I am reading a book", he explained.	He explained that he was reading a book
Simple past	Past perfect
"Bill arrived on Saturday", he said.	He said that Bill had arrived on Saturday.
Present perfect	Past perfect
"I have been to Spain", he told me.	He told me that he had been to Spain.
Past perfect	Past perfect
"I had just turned out the light," he explained.	He explained that he had just turned out the light.
Present perfect continuous	Past perfect continuous
They complained, "We have been waiting for hours".	They complained that they had been waiting for hours.
Past continuous	Past perfect continuous
"We were living in Paris", they told me.	They told me that they had been living in Paris.
Future	conditional
"I will be in Geneva on Monday", he said.	He said that he would be in Geneva on Monday.
Future continuous	Conditional continuous
She said, "I'll be using the car next Friday".	She said that she would be using the car next Friday.

Direct	Indirect
<i>today</i>	<i>that day</i>
<i>yesterday</i>	<i>the day before</i>
<i>the day before yesterday</i>	<i>two days before</i>
<i>tomorrow</i>	<i>the next day/the following day</i>
<i>the day after tomorrow</i>	<i>in two days time</i>
<i>next week/year etc</i>	<i>the following week/year etc.</i>
<i>last week/year etc</i>	<i>the previous week/year etc.</i>
<i>a year ago</i>	<i>a year before/the previous year</i>

But if the speech is made and reported on the same day these time changes are not necessary:

At breakfast this morning he said. I'll be very busy today'

Past tenses sometimes remain unchanged

Past tenses usually do change to past perfect but there are the following exceptions:

1 Past/Past continuous tenses in time clauses do not normally change:

He said, 'When we were living/lived in Paris.' = He said that when they were living in Paris

2 A past tense used to describe a state of affairs which still exists:

She said, 'I decided not to buy the house because it was on a main road' = She said that she had decided not to buy the house because it was on a main road.

Unreal past tenses (subjunctives) in indirect speech

A Unreal past tenses after wish, would rather/sooner and it is time do not change:

'We wish we didn't have to take exams.' said the children =

The children said they wished they didn't have to take exams.

'Bill wants to go alone,' said Ann, *'but I'd rather he went with a group'* =

Ann said that Bill wanted to go alone but that she 'd rather he went with a group.

B I/he/she/we/they had better remains unchanged :

'The children had better go to bed early,' said Tom

Tom said that the children had better go to bed early.

'You'd better not drink the water,' she said = She advised/warned us not to drink the water.

C Conditional sentences types 2 and 3 remain unchanged:

'If my children were older I would emigrate,' he said = He said that if his children were older he would emigrate.

Indirect speech: pronoun and adjective

Pronouns and possessive adjectives usually change from first or second to third person except when the speaker is reporting his own words:

He said, 'I've forgotten the combination of my safe' = *He said that he had forgotten the combination of his safe.*

I said, 'I like my new house' = *I said that I liked my new house,* (speaker reporting his own words)

Sometimes a noun must be inserted to avoid ambiguity: Tom said. 'He came in through the window' would not normally be reported Tom said he had come in through the window as this might imply that Tom himself had come in this way; but if we use a noun there can be no confusion: Tom said that the man/burglar/cat etc, had come in .

Questions in indirect speech

Direct question: *He said, 'Where is she going?'* Indirect question: *He asked where she was going.*

The interrogative form of the verb changes to the affirmative form. The question mark (?) is therefore omitted in indirect questions:

He said, 'Where does she live?' = He asked where she lived.

With affirmative verb questions this change is obviously not necessary:

'Who lives next door?' he said = He asked who lived next door.

If the introductory verb is say, it must be changed to indicate inquiry, e.g. ask, inquire, wonder, want to know : *He said, 'Where is the station?' = He asked where the station was.*

If the direct question begins with a question word (when, where, who, how, why etc.) the question word is repeated in the indirect question:

He said, 'Why didn't you put on the brake?' = He asked why she hadn't put on the brake.

If there is no question word, if or whether must be used:

Is anyone there?' he asked = He asked if/whether anyone was there.

let's, let us, let him/them in indirect speech

let's usually expresses a suggestion and is reported by suggest in indirect speech:

Exercise 1 : With indirect speech, when the person addressed is mentioned, **tell** is more usual than say to as an introductory verb.

Put the following into indirect speech.

1 'I have something to show you,' I said to her.

2 'Nothing grows in my garden. It never gets any sun,' she said.

3 'I'm going away tomorrow, mother,' he said.

4 'It isn't so foggy today as it was yesterday,' I remarked.

5 'The new underpass is being officially opened the day after

6 'We have a lift but very often it doesn't work,' they said.

Exercise 2 : Put the following into indirect speech, being careful to avoid ambiguity:

1 'I couldn't get into the house because I had lost my key, so I had to break a window,' he said.

2 'The mirror is there so that you can see yourself when you are dancing,' said the instructress

3 'I wrote to him the day before yesterday. I wonder why he hasn't rung up,' she said.

4 'If the ground is dry on the day of the race, my horse might win,' said the owner.

5 'You'd better slow down. There's a speed limit here,' she said to me. (*Use advise.*)

6 'If Tom wants seats, he'd better apply early,' she said.

Exercise 3 : Put the following into indirect speech.

He said, 'What is happening?'

He asked what was happening.

1 'What happened to Mr Budd?' said one of the men.

2 'Which of his sons inherited his estate?' asked another.

3 'Who is going to live in the big house?' enquired a third.

4 'What shall I do with my heavy luggage?' she said. (*Use should.*)

5 'What platform does the train leave from?' asked Bill.

6 'When does it arrive in York?' he asked.

7 'Do puppies travel free?' asked a dog owner..

8 'Can I bring my dog into the compartment with me?' she asked.

9 'Does this train stop at York?' asked Bill.

He said, 'Let's leave the case at the station' would be reported: He suggested leaving the case at the station or He suggested that they /we should leave the case at the station.

Similarly in the negative: He said, 'Let's not say anything about it till we hear the facts' = He suggested not saying anything/saying nothing about it till they heard the facts or He suggested that they shouldn't say anything till they heard the facts.

let him/them

In theory let him/them expresses a command. But very often the speaker has no authority over the person who is to obey the command;

'Let the boys clear up this mess,' said the headmaster = The headmaster said that the boys were to clear up the mess. 'Let the guards be armed,' he ordered = He ordered that the guards should be armed.

She said, 'Let them go to their consul. He'll be able to help them' = She suggested their/them going to their consul etc. or She suggested that they should go to their consul or She said that they should go to their consul.

10 'Can you telephone from inter-city trains?' said the businessman.

11 'Why are you looking through the keyhole?' I said.

Exercise 4 : Put the following into indirect speech.

1 'Switch off the TV,' he said to her.

2 'Shut the door, Tom,' she said.

3 'Lend me your pen for a moment,' I said to Mary.

4 'Don't watch late-night horror movies,' I warned them.

5 'Don't believe everything you hear,' he warned me.

6 'Please fill up this form,' the secretary said.

7 'Don't hurry,' I said.

10 He said, 'Get out of my way.'

11 'Climb in through the window,' he ordered.

12 'Please pay at the desk,' said the assistant.

13 'Open your bag, please,' said the store detective.

14 'Don't worry about anything, Mrs Pitt,' said her solicitor. 'Leave it all to me.'

15 'Don't use bent coins in a slot machine,' I warned him.

16 'Follow that car,' the detective said to the taxi-driver.

Exercise : Put the following into indirect speech

1 'What about a round-the-world cruise?' suggested Mrs Smith.

2 she reminded him. 'Why don't you take it up again?'

3 'Shall we talk there? It's not far,' he said. 'Yes, let's,' I said.

4 'What about joining a weaving class?' Ann said to me.

5 'Let's organize a sponsored cycle race,' said the children.

6 'Where shall we meet?' I said. 'What about the hotel?' said Bill.

7 'Let's leave the washing-up till tomorrow,' he suggested.

8 'Why don't you ask them what they'd like to do?' I said.

9 'Shall we begin training for the next London Marathon?' said Bill.

10 'Why don't you put an advertisement in the local paper?' they suggested to