

# REPORTED SPEECH

## 1 Basic rules for Reported Speech.

A- Reported Speech (also referred to as 'indirect speech') is usually reported by a verb in the past (said / told + object)

- "The test *is* difficult," he said. = He said that the test *was* difficult.

B- Words that are spoken or thought in one place by one person may be reported in another place at a different time, and perhaps by another person. Because of this there are often grammatical differences between direct and indirect speech.

- Bill (on Saturday evening) "I am tired, I want to go home now"
- Peter (on Sunday morning) Bill said that he was tired and he wanted to go home at that time.

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

- "I have forgotten *my* keys," he said.
- He said that *he* had forgotten *his* keys.
- I said that I had forgotten *my* keys. (speaker reporting his own words)

D- When the introductory (reporting) verb is in the present (says), present perfect (have/has said), present continuous (is saying) or the future (will say), we can report the direct speech without any change of tense.

- "I watch TV every day," she says.
- She says that she watches TV every day.

This is usual when we are:

- a. reporting a conversation that is still going on
- b. reading a letter and reporting what it says.
- c. reading instructions and reporting them.
- d. reporting a statement that someone makes very often.

## 2 Tenses do no change

a. If the reported sentence deals with a fact or general truth, the present tense is (can be) retained.

*She said that the moon causes the tides.*

b. If the speaker reports something immediately or soon after it was said, the tense remains as spoken.

*A: What did the conductor say?*

*B: He said that the next stop is Northgate.*

c. If will is the modal in reported utterance and expresses future time, and if the situation described in the quotes still holds true at the time of the indirect report, the will may not be changed to would even though the reporting verb is in the past tense:

*Mr. Slack said that a volcanic eruption will occur next year.*

### 3 Tense Changes

#### DIRECT SPEECH

#### INDIRECT SPEECH

Simple Present *changes to* Simple Past

"I *study* Spanish," he said. He said that he *studied* Spanish.

Present Continuous *changes to* Past Continuous

"He *is sleeping*," she said. She said that he *was sleeping*.

Past Continuous *changes to* Past Perfect Continuous

"Sam *was reading* a book," David said. David said that Sam *had been reading* a book.

Present Perfect *changes to* Past Perfect

"I *have finished* work," Tom said. Tom said that he *had finished* work.

Present Perfect Continuous *changes to* Past Perfect Continuous

"She *has been working* for 3 hours," I said. I said that she *had been working* for 3 hours.

Simple Past *changes to* Past Perfect

"I *met* him yesterday," Peter said. Peter said that he *had met* him ...

Past Perfect *remains* Past Perfect

"he *had known* the news," I said. I said that he *had known* the news.

Future *changes to* Conditional

"I *will buy* a car next month," he said. He said that he *would buy* a car the next month.

Future Continuous *changes to* Conditional Continuous

"She *will be studying* tomorrow," I said. I said that she *would be studying* the next day.

Future Perfect *changes to* Conditional Perfect

"He *will have arrived* by midnight," he said. He said that he *would have arrived* by midnight.

#### Modals

Present Modals *change to* Past Modals

"I *can* come," John said. John said that he *could* come.  
 "He *may* be sick," Jim said. Jim said that he *might* be sick.

*These Modals do not change*

would, could, should, might, ought to, used to

"I *would* like a sandwich," he said. He said that he *would* like a sandwich.  
 "It *might* rain today," he said. He said that it *might* rain that day.  
 "I *couldn't* come," she said. She said that she *couldn't* come.

## 4 Adverbs and adverbial phrases of time changes

DIRECT SPEECH	INDIRECT SPEECH
today <i>"I am busy today", she said.</i>	▶▶ that day <i>She said that she was busy that day.</i>
yesterday <i>"I saw him yesterday", she said.</i>	▶▶ the day before / the previous day <i>She said that she had seen him the day before.</i>
the day before yesterday <i>"I met her the day before yesterday", he said.</i>	▶▶ two days before <i>He said that he had met her two days before.</i>
tomorrow <i>"I'll see you tomorrow", he said</i>	▶▶ the next day / the following day <i>He said that he would see me the next day.</i>
the day after tomorrow <i>"We'll come the day after tomorrow", they said.</i>	▶▶ in two days time / two days later <i>They said that they would come in two days time.</i>
next week / month / year <i>"I am going to leave next week", she said.</i>	▶▶ the following (the next) week / month / year <i>She said that she was going to leave the following week.</i>
last week / month / year <i>"I was on holiday last week", he told us.</i>	▶▶ the previous / week / month / year <i>He told us that he had been on holiday the previous week.</i>
ago <i>"I saw her a week ago," he said.</i>	▶▶ before <i>He said he had seen her a week before.</i>
this (for time) <i>"I'm getting a new car this week," she said.</i>	▶▶ that <i>She said she was getting a new car that week.</i>
now <i>"I'm leaving now," he said</i>	▶▶ then / at that moment <i>He said that he was leaving then.</i>
this / that (adjectives) <i>"Do you like this shirt?" he asked</i>	▶▶ the <i>He asked if I liked the shirt.</i>
here <i>He said, "I live here".</i>	▶▶ there <i>He told me he lived there</i>

## 5 Conditional sentences in indirect speech

Type 1: The tenses change in the usual way:

- *She said, 'if I get the job, I will buy a new car'*
- *She said that if she got the job she would buy a new car.*

Type 2: The tenses either change to the third conditional or do not change:

- *'If he woke up early, he wouldn't miss the bus,' he said*
- *He said if he had woken up early he wouldn't have missed the bus.*
- *He said if he woke up early he wouldn't miss the bus.*

Type 3: The tenses do not change:

- *'If she had worked hard, she would have passed the exam,' I said.*
- *I said that if she had worked hard she would have passed the exam*

## 6 QUESTIONS IN INDIRECT SPEECH

- a) Tenses, pronouns and possessive adjectives and adverbs of time and place change as in statements.
- b) If the introductory verb is 'said', it must be changed to a verb of inquiry: *ask, inquire, wonder, want to know*.
- c) The interrogative form of the verb changes to the affirmative form. The question mark (?) is therefore omitted in the indirect question.

### A. AUXILIARY QUESTIONS

Form: reporting verb + if/whether + reported clause

- *"Do you feel cold?" he said*  
*He asked me if I felt cold.*
- *"Shall I wait for them or go on?" she said.*  
*She wondered whether she would wait for them or go on.*

### B. WH+HOW QUESTIONS

Form: reporting verb + interrogative pronoun + reported clause

- *"What is the time?" he said.*  
*He asked what the time was.*
- *"Where did you go last night?" my father said.*  
*My father wanted to know where I had gone the previous night.*

## 7. COMMANDS, REQUESTS AND ADVICE IN INDIRECT SPEECH

The following verbs can be used as reporting verbs: *advise, ask, command, invite, order, request, tell, warn.*

Examples:

- a. *"If I were you I would tell him the truth / Why don't you tell him the truth? / You had better tell him the truth," he said.*  
- *He advised me to tell him the truth.*
- b. *"Would/could you show me your passport, please?" he said to me*  
- *He asked me to show him my passport.*
- c. *"Don't sit on the bed," she said*  
- *She ordered him not to sit on the bed.*
- d. *"Wait for me at the station," he said*  
- *He told me to wait for him at the station.*
- e. *The man with the gun said to us, "Don't move!"*  
- *The man with the gun warned us not to move.*

## 8 SUGGESTIONS IN INDIRECT SPEECH

'Let's / let us' is reported by suggested

- a. *"Let's take a taxi," he said*  
*He suggested taking a taxi.*  
*He suggested that they/we should take a taxi.*
- b. *"Let's not park the car here," she said.*  
*She suggested not parking the car there.*  
*She suggested that they shouldn't park the car there.*

## 9 REPORTED EXCLAMATIONS

- a. *"What a good idea! / How good!" he said --> He exclaimed / said that it was a good idea.*
- b. *"Excellent!" the teacher said --> The teacher gave me exclamation of satisfaction.*
- c. *"Liar!" she said --> She called me a liar.*
- d. *"Good luck!" I said --> I wished him luck*
- e. *"Thank you!" they said --> They thanked me.*