



Direct & Reported Speech



What are Direct and Reported Speeches?

Direct Speech

Direct speech repeats, or quotes, the exact words spoken. When we use direct speech in writing, we place the words spoken between inverted commas ("...") and there is no change in these words. We may be reporting something that's being said NOW (for example a telephone conversation), or telling someone later about a previous conversation.

Reported Speech

Reported speech is usually used to talk about the past, so we normally change the tense of the words spoken. We use reporting verbs like 'say', 'tell', 'ask', and we may use the word 'that' to introduce the reported words. Inverted commas are not used.

TENSE CHANGES

Normally, the tense in reported speech is one tense back in time from the tense in direct speech:

The changes are shown below:

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	→	Present 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.

NOTE:

1. You do not need to change the tense if the tense of the reporting verb is present or future.

He says he *has missed* the train but he *'ll catch* the next one.

We will say we *are preparing* for the party, so you *have* to come and help us.

2. These modal verbs do not change in reported speech: *might, could, would, should, ought to, e.g.*

We *explained* that it *could* be difficult to find our house.

She *said* that she *might* bring a friend to the party.

CHANGE IN TIME AND PLACE REFERENCE

Time/place references are also changed in reported speech.

The most common of these changes are shown below:

Today	→	that day
Yesterday	→	the day before
The day before yesterday	→	two days before
Tomorrow	→	the next/following day
The day after tomorrow	→	in two days time/ two days later
Next week / month /year	→	the following week/month/year
Last week/month/year	→	the previous/week/month/year
Ago	→	before
This (for time)	→	that
Now	→	then / at that moment
This / That (adjectives)	→	the
Here	→	there

Changes in pronouns:

In general, personal pronouns change to the third person singular or plural, except when the speaker reports his own words:

I/me/my/mine, you/your/yours ➡ *he/she/him/his/her/hers*

we/us/our/ours, you/your/yours ➡ *they/their/theirs*:

QUESTIONS:

1. The interrogative form of the verb changes to the affirmative form. The question mark (?) is therefore omitted in the indirect speech. Normal word order is used in reported questions, that is, the subject comes before the verb, and it is not necessary to use 'do' or 'did':

"Where does Peter live?" ➡ She asked him **where Peter lived**.

2. Tenses, pronouns and possessive adjectives and adverbs of time and place change as in statements.

3. If the introductory verb is '**said**', it must be changed to a verb of inquiry: **ask, wonder, inquire, want to know**

Yes / no questions: This type of question is reported by using **'ask' + 'if / whether + clause'**:

a. "Do you speak English?" ➡ He asked me **if I spoke English**.

b. "Are you British or American?" ➡ He asked me **whether I was British or American**.

Question words:

This type of question is reported by using **Reporting verb + Question word + Reported clause**. The clause contains the question, in normal word order and with the necessary tense change.

Examples:

a. "What is your name?" he asked me. ➡ He asked me **what my name was**.

b. "How old is your mother?" he asked. ➡ He asked **how old her mother was**.

ORDERS, REQUESTS & SUGGESTIONS:

1. When we want to report an **order or request**, we can use a verb like 'tell' with a **to-clause**.

Examples:

- a. The doctor said to me, "Stop smoking!". ➡ The doctor **told me to stop smoking**.
- b. "Get out of the car!" said the policeman. ➡ The policeman **ordered him to get out of the car**.
- c. "Could you please be quiet," she said. ➡ She **asked me to be quiet**.
- d. The man with the gun said to us, "Don't move!" ➡ The man with the gun **warned us not to move**.

Other verbs used to report orders and requests in this way are: *command, order, warn, ask, advise, invite, beg, teach, forbid*.

2. **Requests for objects** are reported using the pattern *ask + for + object*:

Examples:

- a. "Can I have an apple?", she asked. ➡ She **asked for an apple**.
- c. "May I have a glass of water?" he said. ➡ He **asked for a glass of water**.
- d. "Sugar, please." ➡ She **asked for the sugar**.

3. **Suggestions** are usually reported with a *that-clause*. 'That' and 'should' are optional in these clauses:

She said: "Why don't you get a mechanic to look at the car?" ➡ She suggested that I should get a mechanic to look at the car. **OR** She suggested I get a mechanic to look at the car.

Other reporting verbs used in this way are: *insist, recommend, demand, request, and propose*.

Examples:

- a. "It would be a good idea to see the dentist", said my mother. ➡ My mother **suggested I see** the dentist.
- b. The dentist said, "I think you should use a different toothbrush". ➡ The dentist **recommended that I should use** a different toothbrush.
- d. "Why don't you sleep overnight at my house?" she said. ➡ She suggested **that I sleep** overnight at her house.

Practice

ACTIVITY ONE: Transform from direct to reported speech.

Your friend Hakima told many things when you met her yesterday. Here what she said.

1. I'm thinking of going to live in France.	10. I hardly ever go out these days.
2. My father is in the hospital.	11. I work 14 hours a day.
3. Sue and Jim are getting married next month.	12. I'll tell Jamila I saw you.
4. I haven't seen Billal for a while.	13. You can come and stay with me if you are ever in Algiers.
5. I've been playing tennis a lot lately.	14. Tom had an accident last week, but he wasn't injured.
6. Barbara has had a baby.	15. I saw Jack at a party a few months ago, and he seemed fine.
7. I don't know what Farid is doing.	16. I'll be here next week.
8. I can afford a vacation this year.	
9. Shut the door but don't lock it.	

1. Hakima said that she was thinking of going to live in France.
2. Hakima said that
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16.

ACTIVITY TWO: Complete sentence (b) so that it means the same as sentence (a).

1. a. "Did you get my email?" Peter said.
b. Peter asked
2. a. "how many times have you seen this movie?" my brother said.
b. My brother asked
3. a. "Get out of the car!" said the policeman.
b. The policeman ordered him
4. a. "Did you come by train or by bus?" my father asked me.
b. My father asked me
5. a. "Stop smoking and practise sport" the doctor said to me.
b. The doctor advised me
6. a. "How long have you lived here?" she said.
b. She asked him
7. a. "can you type?" the headmaster asked him.
b. The headmaster asked him
8. a. "Why don't you see the dentist," my mother suggested.
b. My mother suggested
9. a. "Have you finished reading the newspaper?" my father said.
b. My father asked
10. a. "I will go downtown tomorrow," she has said.
b. She has said
11. a. "Don't be late," she warned him.
b. She warned him
12. a. "I always play cards after I come back from work" he is saying.
b. He is saying
13. a. "Is it raining heavily outside?" I asked him.
b. I asked him
14. a. "When are you going to play the football match?" they asked us.
b. They asked us

ACTIVITY THREE: Complete sentence (b) so that it means the same as sentence (a).

1. a. Peter said that he wanted to visit his parents that week.
b. Peter said.
2. a. Ann said that she had gone to New York the week before.
b. Ann said.
3. a. She asked me if I wanted to come with her.
b. she asked me.
4. a. The teacher told me not to make noise in class.
b. the teacher told me.
5. a. Ken asked her what she was going to do that night.
b. Ken asked her.
6. a. We asked him whether he was British or American.
b. we asked him.
7. a. they said that they would have a party the following week.
b. they said.
8. a. He asked if Sarah had ever been to Italy.
b. he asked.
9. a. He asked me why I wanted to study Russian.
b. he asked me.
10. a. She says that she has been waiting for over an hour.
b. she says.
11. a. He will ask me if my car always makes a nasty smell.
b. he will ask me.
12. a. I said that I had been swimming.
b. I said.
13. a. She said that she had gone to bed early the night before.
b. she said.
14. a. I said that I had not seen her since the previous month.
b. I said.