



GRAMMAR

REPORTED SPEECH

- ⇒ **Direct speech** means the words actually spoken: “I’m tired”, Simon says. We put direct speech in inverted commas (“...”) and we use it when we repeat the exact words of the original speaker.
- ⇒ **Reported or indirect speech** means that we only give the meaning of what was said: Simon says (that) he is tired.

1. REPORTED STATEMENTS (oraciones enunciativas en estilo indirecto)

- a. If the **reporting verb** is in the **present tense, there is no change in tenses**; we just leave out the inverted commas and change the pronouns accordingly: “You can make other plans” → She **says** that we can make other plans.
- b. But more frequently the **reporting verb** is in the **past tense**, so there is a **backshift of tenses**, that is, the verbs in the reported clause go one step back in reported speech. We also have to change time and place expressions depending on the situation: Simon **said**: “I’m tired today” → Simon said that he was tired that day.
- c. **This backshift of tenses does not take place** when the facts in the reported clause are still **true in the present time**, or when it is a **general truth**: He said: “My name is Frank” → He said his name is Frank. “London is the capital of Britain” → She pointed out that London is the capital of Britain.
- d. The reported clause is introduced by the conjunction **THAT**, but in informal written and spoken language it can be omitted: She says (that) we can make other plans.
- e. The most frequent reporting verbs for statements are **SAY and TELL**.

TELL must go with the personal indirect object without “to”: The boss told them that they could leave early.

We use SAY when we do not mention the person we are speaking to: The boss said that they could leave early. We use “to” after SAY, especially when the words are not reported: “What did Pamela say to you?”

TENSE CHANGES

Usually, the tense in reported speech is one tense back in time from the tense in direct speech. The changes are as follows:

Simple present

"I always **drink** coffee", she said



Simple past

She said that she always **drank** coffee.

Present continuous

"I **am reading** a book", he explained.



Past continuous

He explained that he **was reading** a book.

Simple past

"Bill **arrived** on Saturday", he said.



Past perfect

He said that Bill **had arrived** on Saturday.

Present perfect

"I **have been** to Spain", he told me.



Past perfect

He told me that he **had been** to Spain.

*Past perfect

"I **had just turned** out the light," he explained.



*Past perfect

He explained that he **had just turned out** the light.

Present perfect continuous

They complained, "We **have been waiting** for hours".



Past perfect continuous

They complained that they **had been waiting** for hours.

Past continuous

"We **were living** in Paris", they told me.



Past perfect continuous

They told me that they **had been living** in Paris.

*Past perfect continuous

"She **had been studying** English"



*Past perfect continuous

He told me that she **had been studying** English.

Future

"I **will be** in London on Monday", he said



Conditional simple

He said that he **would be** in London on Monday.

Future continuous

She said, "I'll **be using** the car".



Conditional continuous

She said that she **would be using** the car.

Can / May

I **can** play the piano.

I **may** go to the party, I don't know.

Must / Have to

I **must/have to** do homework today.

**Could / Might**

She said that she **could** play the piano.

He said that he **might** go to the party.

**Had to**

He said that he **had to** do homework that day.

- These modal verbs **do not change in reported speech**: *might, could, would, should, ought to* and *used to*.

They said: "It could be difficult to find our house" → They explained that it **could** be difficult to find their house.

She said: "I might bring my friend to the party" → She said that she **might** bring her friend to the party.

CHANGES IN TIME AND PLACE EXPRESSIONS

DIRECT SPEECH	REPORTED SPEECH
Now	Then
Today	That day
Tonight	That night
Yesterday	The day before, the previous day
Yesterday afternoon	The previous afternoon
Tomorrow	The next day, the following day, the day after
Tomorrow morning	The following morning
The day after tomorrow	In two days' time
Next week / next month	The following week / The following month
Last week / last month	The week before / the month before/ the previous week/ the previous month
A week / a month / a year ago	A week / a month / a year before

Here	There
This / these	That / those

2. REPORTED QUESTIONS (preguntas)

⇒ When we report a question, **we change the word order** so that it reflects the structure of an affirmative sentence. **We don't use auxiliaries** (*do, did, etc.*) in reported questions **or a question mark**.

'Who **wrote** this book?', he asked. -> He asked who **had written** this book.

'Which comedians **do you like?**', he asked her. -> He asked her which comedians **she liked**.

⇒ **Yes/No questions**

a. **They start with an auxiliary verb**, and can be answered with yes or no.

b. In reported speech, they are introduced by the verb ASK, among others, and the **conjunction IF or WHETHER**.

"Have they been to Ireland?" I asked him. → I asked him **if/ whether** they had been to Ireland.

Only the conjunction WHETHER can be followed by an **infinitive**:

He wondered whether to wait for them or go home.

WHETHER also implies a **more reduced choice** followed by **OR NOT**:

He asked whether or not he should do the task./ He asked whether he should do the task or not.

⇒ **WH- questions**

They start with an **interrogative word** (what, when, where...). In reported speech, we use the wh-particle instead of *if* or *whether*.

I asked her: "Where have you been?" → I asked her where she had been.

3. REPORTED ORDERS/ COMMANDS AND REQUESTS (órdenes y peticiones)

a. To report an order we use an **infinitive with TO** instead of the imperative, and a **reporting verb** such as TELL or ORDER followed by the **indirect object**:

“Come with me”, he told me → He told me to go with him.

“Please, stand under the spotlight” → He asked me to stand under the spotlight.

There are other verbs that follow the same structure, although they do not express an order. ASK or BEG to express petitions; WARN to express warnings.

b. If the sentence is negative, the particle **NOT is place in front of the infinitive**: “Don’t go there alone” → She warned me not to go there alone.

4. REPORTED SUGGESTIONS AND OFFERS (sugerencias y ofrecimientos)

a. **Suggestions** can be reported in two ways in the affirmative form:

⇒ With the **verb SUGGEST + THAT + SUBJECT + INFINITIVE**:

“Let’s go to the cinema”, Jim said. → He suggested that we go to the cinema. **Se hace la sugerencia a una tercera persona.**

⇒ With the **verb SUGGEST + a gerund**: “Let’s go to the cinema”, Jim said. → Jim suggested going to the cinema. **No se especifica el sujeto.**

⇒ In the **negative, we put NOT in front of the verb** in the reported clause: “Let’s not go to the cinema” → She suggested that we not go to the cinema./ She suggested not going to the cinema.

b. In offers, the structure is **OFFER + INFINITIVE WITH TO**

“I will help you with your cat”. → She offered to help me with my cat.

Apart from the verbs *suggest* and *offer*, we can also use RECOMMEND, ADVISE and INVITE.

WORKSHEET

1. Rewrite these statements in reported speech.

1. They said to me: "You can't talk in this area".

They told me that

2. Judith said to us: "I saw your parents yesterday".

Judith told us that

3. We said to him: "We won't be back until tonight".

We told him that

4. Phil said to her: "I've met lots of people since last week".

Phil told her that

2. Rewrite these questions in reported speech.

1. They said to us: "Do you spend your holidays abroad?"

They asked us

2. He said to me: "How old are you?"

He asked me

3. We said to Mary: "Are you going out tonight?"

We asked Mary

4. Fred said to the policeman: "What time do the shops close today?"

Fred asked the policeman

3. Rewrite these commands or orders in reported speech.

1. We said to Jane: "Don't tell anyone until next week".

We told Jane

2. Kate said to us: "Wait for me, please".

Kate told us

3. They said to her: "Be careful and don't be late".

They told her

4. George said to his son: "Eat up your lunch".

George ordered his son

4. Rewrite these suggestions in reported speech.

1. "Let's go to the cinema tonight, shall we?" John said.

John suggested

2. She said, "Why don't you get a mechanic to check the car?"

She suggested.....

3. "Why don't you go to the doctor?", he said.

He suggested.....

4. "It would be a good idea to see the dentist", said my mother.

My mother suggested.....