

# REPORTED SPEECH

## USE

Reported speech is used to retell or report what other person has actually said. It is a very usual function in everyday language.

## STRUCTURE

- Formal aspects

We can find different ways of expressing the Direct Speech:

- John said: "It is quite hot today".
- 'It is quite hot today', he said
- 'It is quite hot today', said John.

All of them are reported in the same way, taking the usual word order (SVC):

John said it was quite hot that day

- Reporting verbs

The most usual verbs are SAY, TELL or ASK, but they only report the information without adding any extra meaning. "Say" may be followed by the indirect complement, always preceded by the preposition "to". "Tell" is always followed by the indirect complement, without preposition.

Mary said (to her mother) she was tired / Mary told her mother she was tired.

There are other verbs that also add the speaker's intention or the way, or intonation used while speaking:

- In statements: admit, agree, answer, apologize, boast, claim, complain, declare, deny, explain, inform, insist, offer, promise, refuse, remind.
- In questions: enquire, request, want to know, wonder.
- In orders: demand, order, shout, threaten, warn.
- In insistent requests: beg
- In other functions: advise, invite, suggest, recommend.

## TYPES OF SENTENCES

- Statements

Statements are affirmative and negative sentences. When reporting this type of sentences we have to take into consideration the changes in personal pronouns, demonstrative determiners, verbal tenses and adverbial expressions of time and place.

Changes in pronouns: Pronouns and possessive adjectives usually change from first or second person to third person, except when the speaker is reporting his/her own words or is included in the conversation.

e.g.: "I've forgotten the combination of my safe", he said. → He said he had forgotten the combination of his safe.

"this" and "these" usually change into "that" and "those"

Changes in verbal tenses: When the introductory verb (the main verb) is in the present tense, the verb of the words we are reporting doesn't change:

e.g.: She says: "It is a lovely day" → She says it is a lovely day.

But when the introductory verb is in the past tense, some verbal changes are required:

Direct speech	Indirect speech
Present simple	Past simple
Present continuous	Past continuous
Present perfect (continuous)	Past perfect (continuous)
Simple past	Past perfect or simple past
Past continuous	Past perfect continuous
Past perfect (continuous)	Past perfect (continuous)
Future simple (will)	Conditional (would)
Future continuous	Conditional continuous
Future perfect	Conditional perfect
Conditional	Conditional

Changes in expressions of time and place:

Direct speech	Indirect speech
Today	That day
Tonight	That night
Yesterday	The day before/ the previous day
The day before yesterday	Two days before
Tomorrow	The day after / the following day / the next day
The day after tomorrow	In two days' time / two days after
Next week / month / year...	The following week / month... The week / month... after
Last week / month / year...	The week / month... before The previous week / month...
A week / month/ year ago	A week / month... before
Now	Then / in that moment
Tomorrow morning / afternoon / evening / ...	The following morning / afternoon...
Yesterday morning/ afternoon....	The previous morning / afternoon...
here	There

e.g.: "I don't really like the food here. We will have lunch in the office tomorrow", Ann told John. → Ann told John she didn't really like the food there and they would have lunch in the office the following day.

- **Questions**

**Yes/no questions** (the ones starting with an auxiliary verb): when reporting this type, we introduce them with IF and the subject-verb inversion and the question mark disappear.

e.g.: He asked: "Is anyone here?" → He asked if anyone was there.

"Did you see the accident?", asked the policeman. → The policeman asked if he had seen the accident.

**WH- questions**: when we report this kind of questions, the interrogative word remains and the subject-verb inversion and the question mark disappear.

e.g.: "Where does he live?", said Mary. → Mary asked where he lived.

She asked me: "What do you want?" → She asked me what I wanted.

- **Orders**

A direct command usually has an imperative verb. When we report the command, this imperative changes into infinitive with "to".

e.g.: He said: "Get your coat, Tom" → He said to Tom to get his coat.

Negative imperatives (don't + infinitive) change to negative infinitives (not to inf.)

e.g.: "Don't swim out too far, boys", said the monitor.

→ The monitor told the boys not to swim out too far.

- **Exclamations**

Exclamations usually become statements in indirect speech. The exclamation mark also disappears.

Exclamations beginning with "What a..." or "How..." can be reported by: "Exclaimed / said (that)..."

e.g.: He said: "What a dreadful idea!" / "How dreadful!" → He exclaimed it was a dreadful idea / he exclaimed it was dreadful.

Exclamations which are only a word or the transcription of a sound can be reported by "...gave an exclamation of delight / disgust / surprise..."

"Ugh!!", he exclaimed → he gave an exclamation of disgust.

Good!" she said. → She gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

- **Special changes**

- a) "shall I / we?" as requests for instructions or advice, is reported as "ASK / INQUIRE + SHOULD"

"Shall we post it, sir?" he asked → He asked him if they should post it

- b) "Shall I / we?" as an offering is reported with "OFFER + TO INFINITIVE"

"Shall I bring you some tea?", she said → She offered to bring me some tea.

- c) "Shall we?" as a suggestion, is reported with "SUGGEST + VB-ING". The same happens with all the expressions to make suggestions (let's / how about / what about / why don't we?)

"Shall we meet at the theatre?" → He suggested meeting at the theatre

- d) Expressions to give advice are reported with "ADVICE (ic) TO INFINITIVE" or also "SUGGEST +VB-ING"

"You should take care of your things, Tom", she said → She advised Tom to take care of his things

- e) Expressions to ask for something are reported with "ASK FOR"

"Could I have your newspaper, sir?" asked the boy → The boy asked the man for his newspaper.

- f) Requests are reported with "ASK (IC) TO INFINITIVE"

"Can you clear the table?" she said → She asked him to clear the table.

"Will you, please, lend me some money?" Tom asked Jane → Tom asked Jane to lend him some money / Tom insisted Jane on lending him some money

"Would you be so kind as to stop talking?" said the man → The man asked him politely to stop talking.

- g) Invitations are reported with "INVITE (ic) TO INFINITIVE" / "OFFER (ic) TO INFINITIVE OR NOUN"

"Would you like to come with me to the party, Sally?", said John → John invited Sally to go with him to the party.

"Would you like some more cake?", she asked me → she offered me to have some more cake / she offered me some more cake.

## REPORTED SPEECH EXERCISES

**Rewrite the following sentences into reported speech**

1. "Nothing grows in my garden. It never gets any sun", she said.
2. "I'm going away tomorrow, mother", he said
3. "I've been in London for a month but so far I haven't had time to visit the Tower", said Rupert.
4. "The new underpass is being officially opened the day after tomorrow", said the BBC announcer.
5. "I'll come with you as soon as I'm ready", she replied.
6. "I have a German lesson this afternoon and I haven't done my homework yet", said the small boy.
7. "Who is going to live in the big house?", asked the boy.
8. "Which team won the previous match?", said Bill
9. "I don't think your father likes me", said the young wife.
10. "Don't say that!" exclaimed her husband, "it's nonsense"
11. "I found an old Roman coin in the garden yesterday", he said, "and I'm going to take it to the museum this afternoon".
12. "Have you seen the new library?", asked Ann
13. "Is a return ticket cheaper than two singles?", said my aunt.
14. He said: "Get out of my way! If not, I'll call the police!"
15. "Please, pay at the desk", said the assistant.
16. "Are you leaving today or tomorrow morning?", said his secretary.
17. "Why do you think it may be dangerous?", he asked her.
18. "Switch off the TV", he ordered Tom, "I don't like these reality shows"
19. "Don't believe everything you hear", he warned me.
20. "Don't touch that switch, Mary. The wire is not very safe", I said.
21. "What are you going to study?" asked Helena.
22. "If you leave home at six, you should be here by nine", he said.
23. He told his friends: "I'm quite a good cook and I do all my own washing and mending too".
24. - "The puppy can sleep in our bed" said Tom  
- "I'd rather he slept in a basket", said his wife. "That puppy will soon be a very big dog and then there won't be room for all three of us".
25. "I've had gypsies on my land for two years", said the farmer, "and they've given nobody any trouble; but now the Council have asked me to tell them to move on. I don't see why they should be asked to move and I'm writing to my MP about it".
26. "Would you mind moving your case?", said the passenger, "it's blocking the door".
27. - "Could I speak to Albert, please?", I said  
- "He's still asleep", said his mother.  
- "Then, please, wake him" I said. "I have news for him".
28. - "Shall we go for a walk?", said Peter.

- "I like walking," said Ann, "but at the moment my only comfortable walking shoes are being mended. What about going for a drive instead?"
29. - "Jack's parents have asked me to supper tomorrow night," said Ann. "What shall I wear?"
- "I should wear something warm, dear", said her mother. "It's a terribly cold house".
30. "Avoid Marble Arch", said the policeman, "there's going to be a big demonstration there".
31. - "I'm sorry I played the music so loudly", he said.
- "Ok. But be sure I'll call the police next time if you continue with the loud music over 12.00 am", said the neighbour.
32. - "Could I have that shirt, please?", she said.
- "Here you are, madam. It's a wonderful shirt, but be careful when washing it. You should wash it in cold water in case the colours fade", said the shop assistant.
33. - "Don't worry, mum, I'll bring all the shopping into the house", said Mary.
- "Thank you, dear. How willing to help you are! What about going to the cinema later? And I'll invite you to have dinner out", said her mother.