How to use 'Say' and 'Tell'

In reported statements, we can use either 'say' or 'tell'. The meaning is the same, but the grammar is different. For example:

Direct speech:

- John: "I'll be late".

Reported speech:

- John **said** (that) he would be late.

OR

- John **told me** (that) he was going to be late.

With 'tell' we NEED the object (e.g. 'me', 'you', 'her').

With 'say' we CAN'T use the object (e.g. 'me', 'them', 'us').

So we CAN'T say:

- "John ~~said me~~ that he would be late."

- "John ~~told that~~ he would be late."

Here are some correct examples:

- Julie **said** (that) she'd come to the party.

- I **said** (that) I was going to bed early.

- He **told me** (that) he loved living in London.

- They **told John** (that) they would arrive at six.

(We can also use 'tell' in reported orders. In this case, 'tell' is followed by a direct object and 'to + infinitive': 'She told me to sit down').