

# Reported speech

## 1. STATEMENTS

Notice the following tense changes when transforming direct into reported speech.

DIRECT SPEECH	REPORTED SPEECH
simple present	simple past
will	would
simple past (see NOTES) / present perfect / past perfect	past perfect
present progressive	past progressive
past progressive (see NOTES)	past progressive (sometimes past perfect progressive)

He said, 'I want to visit her.' → He said (that) he wanted to visit her.

'We will post it for you,' they said. → They said (that) they would post it for me / us.

'I worked / have worked / had worked for them,' he said. → He said (that) he had worked for them.

She said, 'I'm staying with my aunt.' → She said (that) she was staying with her aunt.

'They will be having dinner then,' he said. → He said (that) they would be having dinner then.

DIRECT SPEECH: He said to me, '...'

REPORTED: He told me that ...

Various verbs such as: advise, order, refuse, offer, promise, warn, etc. + infinitive are used in reported speech to report advice, orders, requests, etc.

'I'll be back in time,' she said. → She promised to be back in time.

'Shall I help you?' → She offered to help me / us.

## 2. QUESTIONS

In reported questions, the subject comes before the verb. Say cannot introduce reported questions; instead of 'say' we use ask, enquire, wonder, etc.

'Where is she going?' he said. → He asked where she was going. [NOT: ...where was she going.]

'Why did he leave?' she said. → She asked why he had left.

If a direct question starts without 'what, where, why', etc., we use if or whether in indirect questions.

'Shall I put it on the table?' she asked. → She asked if / whether she should put it on the table.

### 3. TIME EXPRESSIONS change as follows:

now → then / at that moment / immediately

yesterday → the previous day / the day before (that)

today → that day

tomorrow → the following day / the next day / the day after (that)

tonight → that night

next year → the following year / the next year / the year after

a week ago → a week before (that) / the previous week

last year → the previous year / the year before (that)

this → that / the

these → those / the

here → there

### 4. MODALS change as follows:

can → could

may → might

must → must / had to [for obligation]

must → must [for deduction, possibility]

must not → must not

Need ...? → had to ...?

needn't → needn't / didn't need to / didn't have to

shall → should [asking for advice]

### NOTES:

i. "Let's" usually becomes "suggest": 'Let's go for a walk,' said Tom. → Tom suggested (their/our) going for a walk. OR: Tom suggested that they / we (should) go for a walk.

ii. There is no change in verb tenses in Reported speech when:

1. the sentence expresses a general truth or permanent states and conditions.

2. the introductory verb is in the Present, Future or Present Perfect tense.

3. the verb of the sentence is in the Unreal past (eg. 2nd or 3rd type conditionals).

4. the following verbs are used: had better, could, would, used to, should, might and ought to, mustn't.

5. the reported sentence contains a time clause.

6. the sentence expresses something which is believed to be true. In this case the verb tense can either change or remain unchanged.

# Reported Speech - Grammar Practice

## 1. Turn the sentences into reported speech.

1. 'Don't worry,' he said to Mary. He told \_\_\_\_\_.
2. 'I'll be having a month off in August,' she said. She said \_\_\_\_\_.
3. 'When is your summer holiday?' he asked. He asked (me) \_\_\_\_\_.
4. 'I've got to make a decision tomorrow,' he said. He said \_\_\_\_\_.
5. 'I wish I lived in Spain,' she said. She said \_\_\_\_\_.
6. 'The earth goes round the sun,' he said. He said \_\_\_\_\_.
7. 'I left a message on the kitchen table,' he said. He said \_\_\_\_\_.
8. 'My sister is staying with our aunt tonight,' he said. He said \_\_\_\_\_.

## 2. Choose the correct answer.

1. He suggested [to go / going] for a walk in the park.
2. Sally told me last Monday that she was taking [next day / the next day] off.
3. He promised [to tell / telling] me in advance.
4. The notice said we [didn't have to / mustn't] smoke.
5. I asked them what time [would they be / they would be] home.
6. Cathy told me she had given him the money [the last month / the previous month].

## 3. Correct where necessary.

1. She refused to answer my questions.
2. They asked me if I knew where the cathedral was.
3. We asked the teacher if could we leave early.
4. I'll explain you how to get here.
5. The entrance in the garden was blocked by a huge lorry.
6. Why don't you telephone to them?
7. She described the police what she had seen that night.
8. I asked the airport staff what time the flight will be arriving that night.
9. With the new teacher, we can discuss about anything.
10. A girl phoned me and wanted to know why weren't you there.

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