



Reported speech



Say-Tell- Ask

Say can be used both in **direct** and **reported speech**.

It is used with or without a personal object.

When used with personal object, it is always followed by the preposition to (said to me).

He said, 'I'm cold.'

He said (that) he was cold.

He said to me, 'I'm cold.'

He said to me (that) he was cold.

Tell is always followed by a personal object (told me).

He told me, 'I'm cold.'

He told me (that) he was cold.

Ask is used in reported questions and requests. It is also used in direct questions.

*"Where is Tom?" he **asked** me.*

- *He **asked** me where Tom was.*

"Will you do me a favour?" Mary said to me.

- *Mary **asked** me to do her a favour.*

Verb tenses and time expressions change in reported speech:

	Direct speech	Reported speech
present simple - past simple	"I play the guitar quite well."	He said (that) he played the guitar quite well.
present continuous - past continuous	"I am learning French."	He said (that) he was learning French.
present perfect - past perfect	"I have already watered the flowers."	He said (that) he had already watered the flowers.
past simple - past simple or past perfect	"I won the chess tournament."	He said (that) he (had) won the chess tournament.
past continuous - past continuous, past perfect continuous	"I was writing a letter at five o'clock."	He said (that) he was writing/had been writing a letter at five o'clock.
future (will) - conditional (would)	"I will do the shopping."	He said (that) he would do the shopping.

Modal verbs	Direct speech	Reported speech
will - would	"I will study medicine."	He said (that) he would study medicine.
can - could	"I can cook very well."	He said (that) he could cook very well.
can - could/would be able to (future reference)	"I can meet you at noon."	He said (that) he could/would be able to meet me at noon.
may - might	"I may go for a ride."	He said (that) he might go for a ride.
shall - should asking for advice)	"What shall I tell him?"	He asked what he should tell him.
shall – offer (expressing offers)	" Shall I help you?"	He offered to help me.
must - must/had to (obligation)	"You must write an essay."	He said (that) I must/had to write an essay.
needn't - needn't/didn't need to/didn't have to	"You needn't feed the dog."	I needn't/didn't need to/ didn't have to feed the dog.

Would, could, might, should, ought, had better, used to and mustn't do not change. **Must** does not change when it expresses a logical assumption.

"You should watch a video," he said. He said that we could watch a video.

"You must be happy," Susan said to Joe. –Susan told Joe (that) he must be happy.

Some words and time expressions change according to the meaning of the sentence:

now - then, at the time, immediately

today, tonight - that day, that night

yesterday - the day before, the previous day

two days ago - two days before

last month - the month before, the previous month

this week - that week

tomorrow - the next/following day

next month - the month after, the following month

here – there

come - go

Tenses **do not change** in reported speech when:

a) the introductory verb (say, tell, etc.) is in the present simple, future or present perfect.

*"I live in Tokyo," he **says**.* *He **says** (that) he lives in Tokyo.*

b) the speaker reports something a short time after it was said (up-to-date reporting).

"There is plenty of food in the fridge, " Mum said.

Mum said (that) there is plenty of food in the fridge.

c) the reported sentence deals with type 2 or type 3 conditionals.

"If I had the money, I would travel abroad, " Kelly said.

*Kelly said (that) if she **had** the money, she **would travel** abroad.*


Tenses **can either change or remain the same** in reported speech when the speaker reports a general truth, a law of nature or a permanent state.

"The sun sets in the west," the teacher said.

*The teacher said (that) the sun **sets** in the west.*



Turn the following sentences into reported speech.

1. Robert said, 'This film is very funny'.
 2. 'I'm starting a new job next week,' she said.
 3. 'I can't afford to buy this dress,' said Sally.
 4. 'I got my exam results last week,' he told them.
 5. 'I would buy a car if I had enough money,' he said to her.
 6. Frank said, 'That's the house where I was born.'
 7. 'That was a wonderful party,' said Jill.
 8. 'Oranges grow in hot countries,' the teacher said.
 9. 'A lot of people visit museums,' he said.
 10. 'This is a very famous statue,' the tour guide told us
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Reported Questions

Reported questions are usually introduced with the verbs **ask**, **inquire**, **wonder** or the expression **want to know**. The verb is in the affirmative. The question mark and words/expressions such as **please**, **well**, **oh**, etc., are omitted.

He said to them, 'Please don't hurt me.' **He begged them not to hurt him.**

The verb tenses, pronouns and time expressions change as in statements.

When the direct question begins with a question word (**who**, **where**, **when**, **why**, **what**, **how old**, **how long**, etc.) the reported question is introduced with the same question word. When the direct question begins with an auxiliary verb (is, do, have) or a modal verb (can, may, etc.) then the reported question begins with **if** or **whether**.

"Where are you from?" she asked me. **She asked me where I was from.**

"Can you speak Italian?" Tom asked me. **Tom asked me if / whether I could speak Italian.**



1. 'What is your name?' he asked me.

He asked me **what** my name **was**.

2. 'Where do you live' she asked me.

She asked me **where** I **lived**.

3. 'How many films have you starred in?' Simon asked him.

Simon asked him **how many films he had starred in**.

4. 'Do you know how to solve this problem?' our teacher asked us.

Our teacher asked us **if/ whether we knew how to solve this problem**.

5. 'Have you travelled to many exotic places?' he asked Janet.

He asked Janet **if / whether** he had travelled to many exotic places.

6. '**Can** I use your camera **this** weekend?' he asked his father.

He asked his father **if / whether** he **could** use his camera **that** weekend.



Reported commands, requests, suggestions

To report **commands**, **instructions**, **requests** or **suggestions** in reported speech, we use (ask, order, beg, suggest, tell, etc.) and the **to-infinitive**, **-ing form** or **that-clause** depending on the introductory verb. (see worksheet)

‘Stop the car!’ the policeman said to him.

The policeman ordered him **to stop** the car.

‘Put all the ingredients in a bowl.’ she said to me.

She told me **to put** all the ingredients in a bowl.

‘You should eat more fruit.’ he advised me.

He advised me **to eat** more fruit.

‘Don’t stop the car!’ the policeman said to him.

The policeman ordered him **not to stop** the car.

‘Don’t put all the ingredients in a bowl.’ she said to me.

She told me **not to put** all the ingredients in a bowl.

‘You shouldn’t eat more sweets.’

He advised me **not to eat** more sweets.

1. "How long does it take to get to the city center?" I asked her.

I asked her how long to get to the city Centre.

A. does it take B. had it taken C. did it take D. it took E. it has taken

2. "I won't be back until next Thursday" She told me.

She told me that she until the following Thursday.

A. won't be back C. will be back B. would be back D. wouldn't be back E. wasn't be back

3. The policeman asked me "Where were you last night at the time of the burglary?"

The policeman asked me where I _____ the night before, at the time of the burglary.

A. will be B. have been C. was D. am E. had been

4. Fred asked me "What do you want to eat?"

Fred asked me what I _____ to eat.

A. have been wanted B. want C. have wanted D. had wanted E. wanted

5. The new student asked the professor "Are you Mr. Buyan?"

The new student asked the professor if _____ Mr. Buyan.

A. was he B. he is C. he was D. is he E. he will be

1. D
2. D
3. E
4. E
5. C



Try your best

