



Reported Speech: Theory, Analysis & Formation



What Is Reported Speech?

Reported speech (also known as **indirect speech**) is used to express what **someone else has said**, without quoting them directly.

◆ Direct Speech vs Reported Speech

Direct Speech

He said, "I'm tired."

She asked, "Are you okay?"

Reported Speech

He said **(that)** he was tired.

She asked **if** I was okay.

In reported speech, we often need to change the **tense**, **pronouns**, and **time expressions** to match the new context.



Structure of Reported Speech



General Formation:

Subject + reporting verb + (that) + clause

- "I like coffee." → She said **(that)** she liked coffee.
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Tense Shifts in Reported Speech (Backshifting)

When the reporting verb is in the **past**, the tense in the original sentence usually shifts **one step back**.



Tense Change Chart:

Direct Speech

Present Simple →

Reported Speech

Past Simple

Direct Speech

Reported Speech

Present Continuous →	Past Continuous
Present Perfect →	Past Perfect
Past Simple →	Past Perfect
Past Continuous →	Past Perfect Continuous
Future Simple (will) →	Would
Can / May →	Could / Might
Must →	Had to

✓ Examples:

- “I **am** hungry.” → He said he **was** hungry.
 - “They **have arrived**.” → She said they **had arrived**.
 - “I **will call** you.” → He said he **would call** me.
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Time and Place Changes

Time and place expressions also change in reported speech to reflect the shift in context.



Time Expression Shift Chart:

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
now	then
today	that day
yesterday	the day before
tomorrow	the next day
this (week/month)	that (week/month)
last night/week	the night/week before
next week	the following week
here	there

✓ Example:

- “I’ll see you **tomorrow**.” → He said he would see me **the next day**.
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Pronoun Changes

Pronouns must change based on the **speaker**, **listener**, and **context**.

Direct Reported

I he/she

you I/he/she

we they

my his/her

your my/his/her



Example:

- “I love **my** dog.” → She said **she** loved **her** dog.



Reporting Verbs

- **say (that)** – general statement
- **tell + object (that)** – must have a person
- **ask, advise, suggest, warn, promise**, etc.



“Tell” always needs an object:

- He **told me** that he was tired.
- She **said** that she was tired.
- She **told that** she was tired.



Reporting Questions

There are two types of questions: **Yes/No questions** and **WH- questions**.



A) Yes/No Questions

Use **if** or **whether**, change question word order to a **statement**.

Direct: “Do you like it?”

Reported: He asked **if** I liked it.

✅ B) WH- Questions

Keep the question word, and change to **statement** word order.

Direct: "Where is she?"

Reported: He asked **where** she was.

⚠️ **Do not** use question word order or a question mark.

📢 Reporting Commands, Requests, and Advice

Use **to + verb** (or **not to + verb** for negatives)

✅ Structure:

Reporting verb + object + to-infinitive

Direct Speech

"Sit down."

Reported Speech

He told me **to sit down**.

"Don't touch that!" She warned me **not to touch** that.

"Please help me." He asked me **to help** him.

🧠 Summary Table

Direct Speech Type	Reported Speech Structure
Statement	said (that) + clause
Yes/No Question	asked if/whether + clause
WH- Question	asked + question word + clause
Command	told/asked + object + to + base verb
Negative Command	told/asked + object + not to + base verb

📌 Key Tips

- Backshift tenses **only if** the reporting verb is in the **past**.
- No backshift when reporting something still true:
 - "The sun rises in the east." → She said the sun **rises** in the east.
- Don't use **question word order** in indirect questions.
- Don't forget to change **pronouns and time/place words**!