

# Statements in Reported Speech

If you use a statement in Reported Speech, follow the steps described on our page [Reported Speech – Summary](#).

- changing of the person, backshift of tenses, shifting of expressions of time/place

## 1. The introductory sentence

### 1.1. The introductory sentence in the Simple Present

If the introductory sentence is in the Simple Present, there is no backshift of tenses.

- Direct Speech → Susan, "Mary works in an office."
- Reported Speech → Susan says (that)\* Mary works in an office.

The introductory sentence is here: Susan **says** ... → this sentence is in the Simple Present, so there is **no backshift** of tenses.

### 1.2. The introductory sentence in the Simple Past

If the introductory sentence is in the Simple Past, there is mostly backshift of tenses.

- Direct Speech → Susan, "Mary works in an office."
- Reported Speech → Susan said (that)\* Mary worked in an office.

The introductory sentence is here: Susan **said** ... → this sentence is in the Simple Past, so there is **backshift** of tenses.

### 1.3. Types of introductory sentences

The word *say* in introductory sentences can be substituted with other words, e.g.

- add
- decide
- know
- mention
- remark
- tell \*
- think

## 2. Change of persons/pronouns

The person/pronoun used in Direct Speech may be adapted in Reported Speech, depending on the situation.

Emily and John are talking about fashion at school. Emily says to John:

- Emily, "I like your new T-shirt."

### Possibility 1:

John says to his friend Max in the afternoon:

- Emily said (that) she liked my new T-shirt.

### Possibility 2:

Emily says to her friend Julia in the afternoon:

- I said (that) I liked his new T-shirt.

## 3. Backshift of tenses

If the introductory sentence is in the Simple Past, there is *backshift of tenses* in Reported Speech. We shift the tense used in Direct Speech one step back in Reported Speech. If we use Past Perfect or the modals would, could, should, might, must, ought to and needn't in Direct Speech there is possibility to shift the tense back in Reported Speech.

### 3.1. Simple Present → Simple Past

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Peter, "I <b>work</b> in the garden."	Peter said (that) he <b>worked</b> in the garden.

### 3.2. Simple Past, Present Perfect, Past Perfect → Past Perfect

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Peter, "I <b>worked</b> in the garden."	Peter said (that) he <b>had worked</b> in the garden.
Peter, "I <b>have worked</b> in the garden."	
Peter, "I <b>had worked</b> in the garden."	

### 3.3. Auxiliaries, Modals

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Peter, "I <b>will work</b> in the garden."	Peter said (that) he <b>would work</b> in the garden.
Peter, "I <b>can work</b> in the garden."	Peter said (that) he <b>could work</b> in the garden.
Peter, "I <b>may work</b> in the garden."	Peter said (that) he <b>might work</b> in the garden.
Peter, "I <b>would work</b> in the garden."  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>could</b></li> <li>• <b>might</b></li> <li>• <b>should</b></li> <li>• <b>ought to</b></li> </ul>	Peter said (that) he <b>would work</b> in the garden.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>could</b></li> <li>• <b>might</b></li> <li>• <b>should</b></li> <li>• <b>ought to</b></li> </ul>

### 3.4. Present Progressive → Past Progressive

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
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Peter, "I'm <b>working</b> in the garden."	Peter said (that) he <b>was working</b> in the garden.
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### 3.5. Past Progressive, Present Perfect Progressive, Past Perfect Progressive → Past Perfect Progressive

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Peter, "I <b>was working</b> in the garden."	Peter said (that) he <b>had been working</b> in the garden.
Peter, "I <b>have been working</b> in the garden."	
Peter, "I <b>had been working</b> in the garden."	

## 4. Shifting/Conversion of expressions of time and place

If there is an expression of time/place in the sentence, it may be shifted, depending on the situation.

Emily is at school, writing in her workbook. She misses her red pen at lunchtime. Emily says to John:

- "I lost my red pen **here this morning**."

#### Possibility 1:

John says to his friend Max who is in the same room.

- Emily said (that) she had lost her red pen **here this morning**.

#### Possibility 2:

One day later, John sees his friend Gerry at his house. They talk about school.

- John says to Gerry → Emily said (that) she had lost her red pen **at our school that morning**.
- John says to Gerry → Emily said (that) she had lost her red pen **there yesterday morning**.

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
<b>this</b> evening	<b>that</b> evening
<b>today</b> / <b>this</b> day	<b>that</b> day
<b>these</b> days	<b>those</b> days
<b>now</b>	<b>then</b>
a week <b>ago</b>	a week <b>before</b>
<b>last</b> weekend	the weekend <b>before</b> / the <b>previous</b> weekend
<b>next</b> week	the <b>following</b> week
<b>tomorrow</b>	<b>the next/following day</b>
<b>here</b>	<b>there</b>

\* Do not forget the *person* after the word *tell*:

- She told *me* (that) ...
  - She told *George* (that) ...
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