



## Reported speech

### Meaning and use

If someone says something that you want to tell another person, you can report it using **direct speech** or **reported speech**.

In direct speech we use speech (or quotation) marks to show the exact words the person said.

- "I'm hungry."
- "I love chicken sandwiches."

We can also use a reporting verb to show who was speaking.

- He **says**: "I'm hungry."
- She **tells** me: "I love chicken sandwiches."

**Say** and **tell** are both reporting verbs. We use **tell** when we say who we are speaking to.

#### CORRECT:

- *She **tells** me she loves chicken sandwiches.* (The speaker is talking to 'me'.)
- *She **says** she loves chicken sandwiches.* (We don't know who the speaker is talking to.)
- *She said **TO** me she loves chicken*

**WRONG:** *She **says-me** she loves chicken sandwiches.* (We don't use 'me' with the reporting verb 'say'.)

If the reporting verb is in the **present tense**, then the reported statement stays in the **present tense**:

#### Direct speech

"He's hungry", he **says**.

She **tells** me, "I **love** chicken wings."

#### Reported speech

He **says** he **is** hungry.

She **tells** me she **loves** chicken wings.

If the reporting verb is in the **past tense**, we usually change the **present form** to a **past form** in reported speech.

#### Direct speech

"He's hungry", he **said**.

She **told** me, "I **love** chicken wings."

#### Reported speech

He **said** he **was** hungry.

She **told** me she **loved** chicken wings.



We **change the pronoun** when the speaker or listener changes.

- A boy tells his mother: "*I'm hungry.*"
- Later, the boy's mother tells the father: *He said he was hungry.*

We can use **that**, but we can also miss it out and the meaning is the same.

*He said **that** he was hungry.* > *He said he was hungry.*

*She told me **that** she loved chicken sandwiches.* > *She told me she loved chicken sandwiches.*

## Form

In reported speech, we usually move the direct speech verb one step back in the past.

### 1) Present simple -> past simple

*"I know you."* -> *She said she **knew** him.*

### 2) Present continuous -> past continuous

*"I am having coffee"* -> *He said he **was having** coffee.*

### 3) Present perfect -> past perfect

*"I have finished my homework"* -> *He said he **had finished** his homework.*

### 4) Present perfect continuous -> past perfect continuous

*"I have been studying Chinese"* -> *She said she **had been studying** Chinese.*

### 5) Is going to - > was going to

*"I am going to go home"* -> *She said she **was going to** go home.*

### 6) Future simple - > would

*"I will go to the bank later"* -> *He said he **would go** to the bank later.*

## Notes

1) A reported statement in the **past simple** often stays the same:

*"I **drove** to work"* -> *She said she **drove** to work.*

2) And you can't go further back in time than the **past perfect**, so it stays the same too:

*"I **had driven** to work"* -> *She said she **had driven** to work.*



3) **Modal verbs:** some change in reported speech:

"I **can/can't** speak Turkish" -> *She said she **could/couldn't** speak Turkish.*

"I **must/mustn't** wash my hair" -> *She said she **had to/didn't have to** wash her hair.*

4) Some modal verbs don't change:

"I **could** take the bus" -> *He said he **could** take the bus.*

"I **should** go to bed" -> *She said she **should** go to bed.*

"I **might** watch TV" -> *He said he **might** watch TV.*

5) We don't change the verb in reported speech if the situation hasn't changed, for example if it's a fact or is generally true:

"I **love** you" -> *She told me she **loves** me.*

6) But we can use the past tense to show you're not certain the other person loves her/him – for example, the other person wasn't telling the truth

"I love you" -> *She said she **loved** me.*

## Questions

A **direct question** is:

*Where are you from?*

A **reported question** is:

*He asked where I was from.*

To form a reported question, you need to follow these steps:

1) Use a reporting verb:

*He **asked** where I was from.*

2) Repeat the question word:

*He asked **where** I was from.*

3) Change the pronouns:

*He asked where **I** was from.*

4) Move the tense back:

*He asked where I **was** from.*

5) Use statement word order:

*He asked where **I was from**.*



**Note: Yes/no questions**

For **yes/no questions**, we use **if** or **whether**.

*Example: Is it two o'clock?*

- *She asked if it was two o'clock*
- *She asked whether it was two o'clock*

|                     |
|---------------------|
| <b>Form summary</b> |
|---------------------|

**Positive**

"I **love** you." > He said he **loved** her.

"I'**ve been working** hard." > She told me that she'**d been working** hard.

"I'**ll see** you later." > He said he **would see** me later.

**Negative**

"I **didn't have** time to go shopping." > He said he **hadn't had** time to go shopping. "I **can't talk** to you." > She told me that she **couldn't talk** to me.

"I **wouldn't want** to live in the country." > He said he **wouldn't want** to live in the country.

**Question**

"Where **can** I buy a hamburger?" > She asked **where** she **could** buy a hamburger.

"Who **must** I see at the bank?" > He asked **who** he **had to** see at the bank.

"**Are you going** to Leila's party?" > She asked **if** I **was going** to Leila's party.

**Short answers**

"Yes, I am. / No, I'm not."> **I said I was. / I said I wasn't.**

**Take note: facts and general truths** We don't change the verb in reported speech if the situation hasn't changed, for example if it's a fact or is generally true. Compare:

*She **told me she loves me.*** (The speaker uses the present tense to show (s)he believes the other person still loves her/him now.)

*She **told me she loved me.*** (The speaker uses the past tense to show (s)he isn't certain the other person loves her/him – for example, the other person wasn't telling the truth.)

**Take note: the past perfect** The past perfect doesn't change in reported speech because there isn't a verb form further 'back in time'.

*"I **had never eaten** sushi before I went to Japan." > 'She told me that she **had never eaten sushi** before she went to Japan.*

**Take note: reporting verbs**

We can use different verbs to report our thoughts, opinions or intentions.

"I know which way to go." -> He **thought** he knew which way to go.

"I stole the books." -> He **admitted** that he had stolen the books.

"Why doesn't she like me?" -> He **wondered** why she didn't like him.

## Reported Statements Mixed Exercise

**Change this direct speech into reported speech:**

1. "He works in a bank"

She said \_\_\_\_\_

2. "We went out last night"

She told me \_\_\_\_\_

3. "I'm coming!"

She said \_\_\_\_\_

4. "I was waiting for the bus when he arrived"

She told me \_\_\_\_\_

5. "I'd never been there before"

She said \_\_\_\_\_

6. "I didn't go to the party"

She told me \_\_\_\_\_

7. "Lucy'll come later"

She said \_\_\_\_\_

8. "He hasn't eaten breakfast"

She told me \_\_\_\_\_

9. "I can help you tomorrow"

She said \_\_\_\_\_

10. "You should go to bed early"

She told me \_\_\_\_\_

11. "I don't like chocolate"

She told me \_\_\_\_\_

12. "I won't see you tomorrow"

She said \_\_\_\_\_