

## REPORTED SPEECH

### DIRECT AND INDIRECT (OR REPORTED) SPEECH. INTRODUCTION

There are two ways of relating what a person has said: direct and indirect.

In direct speech we repeat the original speaker's exact words:

*He said, "I have lost my umbrella."*

Remarks thus repeated are placed between inverted commas, and a comma is placed immediately before the remark. Direct speech is found in conversations in books, in plays and in quotations.

In indirect speech we give the exact meaning of a remark or a speech, without necessarily using the speaker's exact words:

*He said (that) he had lost his umbrella.*

There is no comma after **say** in indirect speech. **that** can usually be omitted after **say** and **tell** + object. But it should be kept after other verbs: **complain**, **explain**, **object**, **point out**, **protest** etc. Indirect speech is normally used when conversation is reported verbally, though direct speech is sometimes here to give a more dramatic effect.

When we turn direct speech into indirect, some changes are usually necessary.

### PRONOUNS AND ADJECTIVES: CHANGES NECESSARY

- A. First and second person pronouns and possessive adjectives normally change to the third person except when the speaker is reporting his own words. (I = he, she; me = him, her; my = his, her; mine = his, hers; we = they...)

*She said, "he's my son". → She said that he was her son.*

*"I'm ill", she said. → She said that she was ill.*

### EXPRESSIONS OF TIME AND PLACE IN INDIRECT SPEECH

- A. Adverbs and adverbial phrases of time change as follows:

DIRECT SPEECH	INDIRECT SPEECH
<i>today</i>	<i>that day</i>
<i>yesterday</i>	<i>the day before</i>
<i>the day before yesterday</i>	<i>two days before</i>
<i>tomorrow</i>	<i>the next day/the following day</i>
<i>the day after tomorrow</i>	<i>in two day's time</i>
<i>next week/year etc.</i>	<i>the following week/year etc.</i>
<i>last week/year etc.</i>	<i>the previous week/year etc.</i>
<i>a year etc. ago</i>	<i>a year before/the previous year</i>

*"I saw her the day before yesterday", he said. → He said he'd seen her two days before.*

*"I'll do it tomorrow", he promised. → He promised that he would do it the next day.*

*She said, "My father died a year ago". → She said that her father had died a year before/the previous year.*

**STATEMENTS IN INDIRECT SPEECH: TENSE CHANGES NECESSARY**

- B. But indirect speech is usually introduced by a verb in the past tense. Verbs in the direct speech have then to be changed into a corresponding past tense. The changes are shown in the following table.

DIRECT SPEECH	INDIRECT SPEECH
<b>Simple Present</b> <i>"I never eat meat", he explained.</i>	<b>Simple Past</b> <i>= He explained (that) he never ate meat.</i>
<b>Present Continuous</b> <i>"I'm waiting for Ann", he said.</i>	<b>Past Continuous</b> <i>= He said (that) he was waiting for Ann.</i>
<b>Present Perfect</b> <i>"I have found a flat", he said.</i>	<b>Past Perfect</b> <i>= He said (that) he had found a flat.</i>
<b>Present Perfect Continuous</b> <i>He said, "I've been waiting for ages".</i>	<b>Past Perfect Continuous</b> <i>= He said (that) he had been waiting for ages.</i>
<b>Simple Past</b> <i>"I took it home with me", she said.</i>	<b>Past Perfect</b> <i>= She said (that) he had taken it home with her.</i>
<b>Future</b> <i>He said, "I will/shall be in Paris on Monday".</i>	<b>Conditional</b> <i>= He said (that) he would be in Paris on Monday.</i>
<b>Future Continuous</b> <i>"I will/shall be using the car myself on the 24h", she said.</i>	<b>Conditional Continuous</b> <i>= She said (that) she'd been using the car herself on the 24th.</i>
<b>Conditional</b> <i>I said, "I would like to see it".</i>	<b>Conditional</b> <i>= I said (that) I would like to see it.</i>

All those changes represent the distancing effect of the reported speech. Common sense, together with the time aspect from the speaker's point of view, are more important than the rules when making the usual changes.

**QUESTIONS IN INDIRECT SPEECH**

Direct question: *He said, "Where is she going?"*

Indirect question: *He asked where she was going.*

- A. When we turn direct questions into indirect speech, the following changes are necessary:
- tenses, pronouns and possessive adjectives, and adverbs of time and place change as in statements.
  - the interrogative form of the verb changes to the affirmative form.
  - the question mark is omitted in indirect questions.
- B. If the introductory verb is **say**, it must be changed to a verb of inquiry, e.g. **ask, wonder, want to know** etc.

*He said, "Where is the station?" → He asked where the station was.*

- C. **ask** can be followed by the person addressed (indirect object):

*He asked, "What have you got in your bag?" → He asked (me) what I had got in my bag.*

But **wonder** and **want to know** cannot take an indirect object, so if we wish to report a question where the person addressed is mentioned, we must use **ask**.

*He said, "Mary, when is the next train?" → He asked Mary when the next train was.*

- D. If the direct question begins with a question word (when, where, who, how, why etc.) the question word is repeated in the indirect question:

*He said, "Why didn't you put on the brake?" → He asked (her) why she hadn't put on the brake.*

*She said, "What do you want?" → She asked (them) what they wanted.*

- E. If there is no question word, **if** or **whether** must be used:

*"Is anyone there?" he asked → He asked if/whether anyone was there.*

**SAY AND TELL AS INTRODUCTORY VERBS**A. **say** and **tell** with direct speech.

- say** can introduce a statement or follow it.

*Tom said, "I've just heard the news". or "I've just heard the news", Tom said.*

Inversion of **say** and noun subject is possible when **say** follows the statement.

*"I've just heard the news", said Tom.*

**say + to + person addressed** is possible, but this phrase must follow the direct statement; it cannot introduce it.

*"I'm leaving at once", Tom said to me.*

Inversion is not possible here.

- tell** requires the person addressed.

*Tell me. He told us. I'll tell Tom.*

Except with **tell lies/stories/the truth/the time**, when the person addressed need not to be mentioned.

*He told (me) lies. I'll tell (you) a story.*

**Tell** used with direct speech must be placed after the direct statement:

*"I'm leaving at once", Tom told me.*

Inversion is not possible with **tell**.

B. **say** and **tell** with indirect speech

Indirect statements are normally introduced by **say**, or **tell + object**. **Say + to + object** is possible but less usual than **tell + object**.

*He said he'd just heard the news.*

*He told me that he'd just heard the news.*

Note also **tell ... how/about**:

*He told us how he had crossed the mountains.*

*He told us about crossing the mountains.*

*He told us about his journeys.*