

Reported speech 1 (he said that ...)

A Study this example situation:



You saw Paul yesterday and you want to tell somebody what he said.

There are two ways of doing this:

You can repeat Paul's words (direct speech):

Paul said, '**I'm feeling ill.**'

Or you can use reported speech:

Paul said **that he was feeling ill.**

Compare:

direct Paul said, '**I am** feeling ill.'

reported Paul said that **he was** feeling ill.

In writing we use these quotation marks to show direct speech.

B When we use reported speech, the main verb of the sentence is usually past (Paul **said** that ... / I **told** her that ... etc.). The rest of the sentence is usually past too:

- Paul **said** that he **was feeling** ill.
- I **told** Lisa that I **didn't have** any money.

You can leave out **that**. So you can say:

- Paul **said that** he was feeling ill. *or* Paul **said** he was feeling ill.

In general, the *present* in direct speech changes to the *past* in reported speech:

am/is → **was** do/does → **did** will → **would**
 are → **were** have/has → **had** can → **could**
 want/like/know/go etc. → **wanted/liked/knew/went** etc.

See also Unit 48A.

Compare direct and reported speech:

You met Anna. Here are some of the things she said in *direct* speech:

I've lost my phone.
 I **want** to buy a car.
 I **can't** come to the party on Friday.
 I **don't** have much free time.
 My parents **are** fine.
 I'm going away for a few days.
 I'll phone you when I **get** back.



Later you tell somebody what Anna said. You use *reported* speech:

- Anna said that she **had** lost her phone.
- She said that she **wanted** to buy a car.
- She said that she **couldn't** come to the party on Friday.
- She said that she **didn't** have much free time.
- She said that her parents **were** fine.
- She said that she **was** going away for a few days and **would** phone me when she **got** back.

C The *past simple* (**did/saw/knew** etc.) can stay the same in reported speech, or you can change it to the *past perfect* (**had done / had seen / had known** etc.):

- direct* Paul said: 'I **woke** up feeling ill, so I **didn't go** to work.'
- reported* Paul said (that) he **woke** up feeling ill, so he **didn't go** to work. *or* Paul said (that) he **had woken** up feeling ill, so he **hadn't gone** to work.

Exercises

47.1 You talked to some friends of yours (Paul, Tom, Anna etc.). Read what they said on the left (direct speech). Later (the same day) you tell another friend what they said (reported speech). Complete the sentences.

	<i>direct speech</i>	<i>reported speech</i>
	1 YOU: Are you going to work today, Paul? PAUL: No, I'm feeling ill.	Paul didn't go to work today. He said <u>he was feeling</u> ill.
	2 YOU: Shall we walk to the station? TOM: No, it's too far. Let's get a taxi.	I wanted to walk to the station, but Tom said far.
	3 YOU: Have you been invited to the party? ANNA: Yes, but I don't want to go.	Anna has been invited to the party but she told me to go.
	4 YOU: When are you going away, Dan? DAN: I'll let you know next week.	I asked Dan about his travel plans. He said next week.
	5 YOU: Do you ever see Rachel these days? BEN: I haven't seen her for a while.	I asked Ben about Rachel, but he told me for a while.
	6 YOU: Where can I borrow a guitar? KATE: You can borrow mine.	I needed to borrow a guitar and Kate said
	7 YOU: How's your job, Sue? SUE: I'm not enjoying it very much.	I asked Sue about her job. She said very much.
	8 YOU: Do you still have your car? JAMES: No, I sold it a few months ago.	I asked James about his car. He told me a few months ago.
	9 YOU: What's the name of the cafe we went to? SARAH: I don't know.	I asked Sarah the name of the cafe we went to but she said
	10 YOU: How many students are there in your class, Amy? AMY: Twenty.	I asked Amy about her school and she told me class.

47.2 Somebody says something to you which is not what you expected. Use your own ideas to complete your answers.

- A: It's quite a long way from the hotel to the city centre.
B: Is it? The man on the reception desk said it was only five minutes' walk.
- A: Sue is coming to the party tonight.
B: Is she? I saw her a few days ago and she said she
- A: Sarah gets on fine with Paul.
B: Does she? Last week you said each other.
- A: Joe knows lots of people.
B: That's not what he told me. He said anyone.
- A: Jane will be here next week.
B: Oh, really? When I spoke to her, she said away.
- A: I'm going out tonight.
B: Are you? I thought you said at home.
- A: I speak French quite well.
B: Do you? But earlier you said any other languages.
- A: I haven't seen Ben recently.
B: That's strange. He told me last weekend.

Reported speech 2

A We do not always change the verb in reported speech. If the situation *is still the same*, it is not necessary to change the verb to the past. For example:

- direct* Paul said, 'My new job **is** boring.'
- reported* Paul said that **his** new job **is** boring.
(The situation is still the same. His job is still boring now.)
- direct* Helen said, 'I **want** to go to Canada next year.'
- reported* Helen told me that **she wants** to go to Canada next year.
(Helen still wants to go to Canada next year.)

You can also change the verb to the past:

- Paul said that his new job **was** boring.
- Helen told me that she **wanted** to go to Canada next year.

But if the situation has *changed* or *finished*, you need to use a past verb. Compare:

- Paul left the room suddenly. He said 'I **have to go**.' (*direct speech*)
- Paul left the room suddenly. He said (that) **he had to go**. (*not has to go*)

B You need to use the past in reported speech when what was said is different from what is really true. For example:

You met Rachel a few days ago. She said:

- Have you heard? **Joe is in hospital**.

Later that day you meet Joe in the street. You say:

- Joe, this is a surprise. Rachel said you **were** in hospital.
(*not 'you are in hospital' – it's clear that he isn't*)



C **say** and **tell**

If you say *who* somebody is talking to, use **tell**:

- Rachel **told me** that you were in hospital. (*not Rachel said me*)
- What did you **tell the police**? (*not say the police*)

Otherwise use **say**:

- Rachel **said** that you were in hospital.
(*not Rachel told that ...*)
- What did you **say**?

You can '**say** something **to** somebody':

- Anna **said** goodbye **to** me and left. (*not Anna said me goodbye*)
- What did you **say to** the police?



D We say '**tell** somebody **to** ...' and '**ask** somebody **to** ...'.

Compare direct and reported speech:

- direct* 'Drink plenty of water,' the doctor said to me.
- reported* The doctor **told me to drink** plenty of water.
- direct* 'Don't work too hard,' I said to Joe.
- reported* I **told Joe not to work** too hard.
- direct* 'Can you help me, please,' Jackie said to me.
- reported* Jackie **asked me to help** her.

You can also say 'Somebody **said (not) to** do something':

- Paul **said not to worry** about him. (*but not Paul said me*)

Exercises

48.1 Here are some things that Sarah said to you earlier:



I've never been to the United States.

I don't have any brothers or sisters.

I can't drive.

I don't like fish.

Jane has a very well-paid job.

I'm working tomorrow evening.

Jane is a friend of mine.

Dave is lazy.

But later Sarah says something different to you. What do you say?

Sarah	You
1 Dave works very hard.	But you said he was lazy.
2 Let's have fish for dinner.	But
3 I'm going to buy a car.
4 Jane is always short of money.
5 My sister lives in Paris.
6 I think New York is a great place.
7 Let's go out tomorrow evening.
8 I've never spoken to Jane.

48.2 Complete the sentences with **say** or **tell** (in the correct form). Use only one word each time.

- Anna said goodbye to me and left.
- us about your holiday. Did you have a nice time?
- Don't just stand there! something!
- I wonder where Sue is. She she would be here at 8 o'clock.
- Dan me that he was bored with his job.
- The doctor that I should rest for at least a week.
- Gary couldn't help me. He me to ask Chris.
- Gary couldn't help me. He to ask Chris.
- Don't anybody what I It's a secret just between us.
- 'Did Kate you what happened?' 'No, she didn't anything to me.'

48.3 The following sentences are direct speech:

Don't wait for me if I'm late. Mind your own business.

Please slow down! Can you open your bag, please?

Hurry up! Will you marry me? Do you think you could give me a hand, Tom?

Don't worry, Sue.

Now choose one of these to complete each of the sentences below. Use **reported speech**.

- Will was taking a long time to get ready, so I told him to hurry up.
- Sarah was driving too fast, so I asked
- Sue was nervous about the situation. I told
- I couldn't move the piano alone, so I
- The security guard looked at me suspiciously and
- The man started asking me personal questions, so I
- Carl was in love with Maria, so he
- I didn't want to delay Helen, so I