

Reported speech

STATEMENTS

In direct statements we report what somebody has said by putting their exact words in quotation marks.

In reported statements we explain what has been said by using reporting verbs like *say* and *tell* followed by a *that*-clause.

FORM

Subject + reporting verb + *that*-clause
The conjunction *that* can be left out.



Some changes in reported speech

Modal verbs

Will ⇒ would
Can ⇒ could
May ⇒ might

Pronouns and possessive adjectives

I ⇒ he/she
Me ⇒ him/her
My ⇒ his/her
We ⇒ they
Us ⇒ them
Our ⇒ their

Time and place expressions

Now ⇒ then
Today ⇒ that day
This ⇒ that
Here ⇒ there

Verb tenses used in direct speech change one tense back in the past when the reporting verb is in the past. Present becomes past and past becomes Past perfect.

When the reporting verb is in the present the verb tense is used in direct speech does not change in reported speech.

Uses

We use *tell* in reported statements when we want to mention the person we are talking to. Otherwise we use *say*. Other verbs used to report what people say are *reply*, *explain*, *promise*, *claim*, *insist*, *announce*, *declare*, etc.

REPORTED SPEECH

Present Simple I'm a teacher	Past Simple She said she was a teacher.
Present Continuous I'm having lunch with my parents.	Past Continuous She said she was having lunch with his parents.
Present Perfect Simple I've been to England 3 times.	Past Perfect Simple He said he had been to England 3 times.
Present Perfect Continuous I've been working very hard	Past Perfect Continuous He said he had been working very hard.
Past Simple I bought a new house	Past Perfect He said he had bought a new house.
Past Continuous It was raining earlier	Past Perfect Continuous He said it had been raining earlier.
Past Perfect The play had started when I arrived.	Past Perfect NO CHANGE POSSIBLE
Past Perfect Continuous I'd already been living in New York for 5 years.	Past Perfect Continuous NO CHANGE POSSIBLE
Will I'll come and see you soon	Would He said he would come and see me soon
Can I can swim	Could He said he could swim
Must All tickets must be bought in advance	Had To He said that all tickets had to be bought in advance.
Shall What shall we do about it?	Should He asked what we should do about it
May May I smoke?	Might He asked if he might smoke.

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