



REPORTED SPEECH & DIRECT SPEECH

There are two ways to report what someone says or thinks.

1. **Direct speech** shows a person's exact words. **Quotation marks** (". . .") are a sign that the words are the same words that a person used. For example:

Maria: Where are you going?
John: I'm going home.

Direct speech:

Maria asked, "Where are you going?"
John replied, "I am going home."

2. **Reported speech** puts the speaker's words or ideas into a sentence **without quotation marks**. Noun clauses are usually used. For example:

Maria: Where are you going?
John: I'm going home.

Reported speech:

Maria asked John where he was going.
John said that he was going home.

Note: *That* is optional in reported speech. Both of the following sentences are correct.

The boy said that he was lost.
The boy said he was lost.

Many changes must be made to a sentence when you use reported speech. These will be explained in this handout.

- Verb tenses
- Questions and word order
- Pronoun changes
- Place and time word changes
- Infinitives
- Verb forms with suggest and recommend

VERB TENSE IN REPORTED SPEECH

When you report what someone said in the past, you usually shift back a verb tense from the tense the speaker used:

simple present	—————▶	simple past
past	—————▶	past perfect
present perfect	—————▶	past perfect
<i>will</i>	—————▶	<i>would</i>
<i>can</i>	—————▶	<i>could</i>

Quotation

Reported speech

“I *am* hungry.”

She stated that she *was* hungry.

“I *saw* them leave.”

Pat said he *had seen* them leave.

“Where *have* they *gone*?”

James wondered where they *had gone*.

“*Will* you *help* me?”

I asked John if he *would help* me.

“I *can't remember* your name.”

Lisa said she *couldn't remember* my name.

Note: If the information in the reported speech is still true, you may use the same tense.

Quotation

Reported speech

“The exam *will be* next week.”

Dr. Jones said the exam *will be* next week.

“I *want* to see that movie.”

Kim said that she *wants* to see that movie.

QUESTIONS IN REPORTED SPEECH

Word order: The word order in a reported question is the same as in a statement. The subject comes before the verb.

Question:	Are you ready?
Statement:	I am ready.
Question in reported speech:	She wanted to know if I was ready.

Punctuation: If the sentence is a statement, end it with a period (.) even if it contains a reported question.

Statement containing a reported question:

She asked me what I thought of the new movie.

Question containing a reported question:

Did she ask what you thought of the new movie?

YES/NO QUESTIONS

To change a yes/no question to a noun clause in reported speech, introduce the noun clause with *if* or *whether*. *Whether or not* may also be used.

Quotation

Reported Speech

“Did you turn off the coffee pot?”

I asked Amy *if she had turned off the coffee pot*.

“Is supper ready?”

Eli wanted to know *whether supper was ready*.

“Will you be at the party?”

Paul asked me *whether or not I would be at the party*.

“Should I tell her the news?”

Jack wanted to know *if he should tell Maria the news*.

Jack wondered *whether he should tell Maria the news or not*.

Jack asked *whether he should tell Maria the news*.

INFORMATION QUESTIONS

To change an information question to a noun clause in reported speech, *begin the noun clause with the question word*, and remember to use *sentence word order*.

Quotation

Reported Speech

“Where do they live?”

Abdul wanted to know *where they live*.

“When did you call?”

Sharon asked me *when I had called*.

“What time is it?”

Do you know *what time it is?*

“Why did you say that?”

Pedro asked me *why I had said that*.

“How do you pronounce your name?”

Please tell me *how you pronounce your name*.

“Where will you stay?”

Have you decided *where you will stay?*

PRONOUNS

Since the person who is reporting what someone said is usually different from the person who made the original statement, pronouns in reported speech often change.

Quotation

“*I* am hungry.”

“Where will *you* be?”

“Have *you* seen *my* glasses?”

Reported Speech

George said *he* was hungry.

Bill wanted to know where *I* would be.

Karen asked me if *I* had seen *her* glasses.

PLACE AND TIME

Changes in place and time words depend on changes in the situation between direct and reported speech.

Quotation

“I don’t like *this* book.”

“I’ll see you *tomorrow*.” (spoken on Thursday)

Reported Speech

Jaime said he didn’t like *that* book.

Michiko said she would see me *today*.
(spoken on Friday)

Michiko said she would see me *yesterday*.
(spoken on Saturday)

INFINITIVES

Infinitives (*to* + the simple form of the verb) may sometimes be used instead of noun clauses.

Commands can be reported two ways:

1. a noun clause with a modal (usually *should*)
2. an infinitive

Quotation

“*Call* me when you get home.”

“*Plan* ahead.”

Reported Speech

She said that we *should call* her when we get home.

She said *to call* her when we get home.

My father told me that I *should plan* ahead.

My father told me *to plan* ahead.

Requests for action or permission can be reported two ways:

1. a noun clause with *if*
2. an infinitive

Quotation

Reported Speech

Action:

“*Will you carry* the box for me?”

She asked me *if I would carry* the box for her.
She asked me *to carry* the box for her.

Permission:

“*Can I make* an appointment?”

The student asked *if he could make* an appointment.
The student asked *to make* an appointment.

RECOMMEND AND SUGGEST

The subjunctive, or base, form of the verb (no tense, without *to*) is used in reported speech when the main verb is *recommend* or *suggest*.

Quotation

Reported Speech

“You *should arrive* early.”

John *recommended* that we *arrive* early.

“*Don’t wait* to apply.”

Anna *recommended* that I not *wait* to apply.

“Kathy *should call* me.”

I will *suggest* that Kathy *call* you.

Revised 2004

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