

## 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."*

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

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

There is no (:) 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.*

#### B. THIS / THESE

**This** used in time expressions usually becomes **that**.

*She said: "She's coming this week". → She said that she was coming that week.*

### 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.

- B. **here** can become **there** but only when it is clear what place is meant:

At the station he said: "I'll be here again tomorrow". → He said that he'd be there again the next day.

### STATEMENTS IN INDIRECT SPEECH: TENSE CHANGES NECESSARY

- A. Indirect speech can be introduced by a verb in a present tense: *He says that ...* This is usual when we are:

- reporting a conversation that is still going on
- reading a letter and reporting what it says
- reading instructions and reporting them
- reporting a statement that someone makes very often.

When the introductory verb is in a present, present perfect or future tense we can report the direct speech without any change of tense:

PAUL (phoning from the station): *I'm trying to get a taxi.*

ANN (to Mary, who is standing beside her): *Paul says he is trying to get a taxi.*

- 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 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 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:
  - a. tenses, pronouns and possessive adjectives, and adverbs of time and place change as in statements.
  - b. the interrogative form of the verb changes to the affirmative form.
  - c. 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. 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.*

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

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

### COMMANDS, REQUESTS, ADVICE IN INDIRECT SPEECH

Direct command: *He said: "Lie down, Tom".*

Indirect command: *He told Tom to lie down.*

Indirect commands, requests, advice are usually expressed by a verb of command/request/advice + object + infinitive.

- A. The following verbs can be used: **advise, ask, beg, command, order, remind, tell, warn** etc.

*He said: "Get your coat, Tom!" → He told Tom to get his coat.*

- B. Negative commands, requests etc. are usually reported by **not** + infinitive:

*"Don't swim out too far, boys", I said → I warned/told the boys not to swim out too far.*