


a Study this example situation:



You want to tell someone else what Tom said. There are two ways of doing this:

You can repeat Tom's words (*direct* speech):
Tom said, "I'm feeling sick."

Or you can use *reported* speech:
Tom said (that) he was feeling sick.

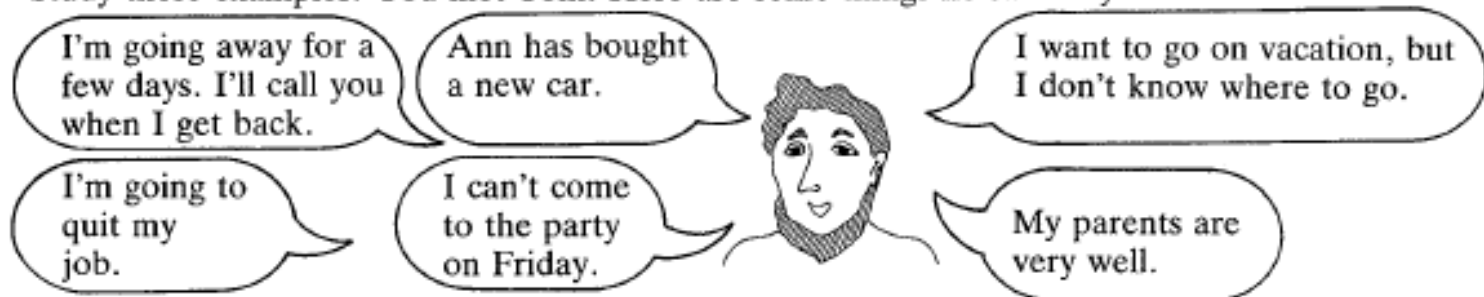
Compare the two sentences:

<i>direct</i>	Tom said, "I am feeling sick."	you use these to show it is direct speech
<i>reported</i>	Tom said (that) he was feeling sick.	

b When we use reported speech, we are usually talking about the past. So verbs usually change to the past in reported speech. For example:

am/is → **was** have/has → **had** can → **could**
are → **were** will → **would** do/want/know → **did/wanted/knew**, etc.

Study these examples. You met Tom. Here are some things he said to you:



I'm going away for a few days. I'll call you when I get back.

Ann has bought a new car.

I want to go on vacation, but I don't know where to go.

I'm going to quit my job.

I can't come to the party on Friday.

My parents are very well.

Now you tell someone else what Tom said (in reported speech):

- Tom said (that) his parents **were** very well.
- Tom said (that) he **was** going to quit his job.
- Tom said (that) Ann **had** bought a new car.
- Tom said (that) he **couldn't** come to the party on Friday.
- Tom said (that) he **wanted** to go on vacation, but he **didn't know** where to go.
- Tom said (that) he **was** going away for a few days and **would** call me when he **got** back.

c The simple past (**I did**) can usually stay the same in reported speech, or you can change it to the past perfect (**I had done**): did → **did** or **had done**

direct Tom said "I **woke** up feeling sick and so I **stayed** in bed."

reported Tom said (that) he **woke** (or **had woken**) up feeling sick and so he **stayed** (or **had stayed**) in bed.

For reported speech see also Units 46 and 48b.

a It is not always necessary to change the verb when you use reported speech. If you are reporting something and you feel that it is still true, you do not need to change the tense of the verb:

direct Tom said, "New York **is** bigger than London."

reported Tom said (that) New York **is** (*or was*) bigger than London.

direct Ann said, "I **want** to go to Turkey next year."

reported Ann said (that) she **wants** (*or wanted*) to go to Turkey next year.

Notice that it is also correct to change the verb into the *past*.

But you *must* use a past tense when there is a difference between what was said and what is really true. Study this example situation:

You met Ann. She said, "Jim **is** sick." (*direct speech*)

Later that day you see Jim playing tennis and looking fine. You say:

"I'm surprised to see you playing tennis, Jim. Ann said that you **were** sick."

(*not* that you are sick, because he isn't sick)

Must, might, could, would, should, and ought stay the same in reported speech. **May** in direct speech normally changes to **might** in reported speech.

b Say and tell

If you say *who* you are talking to, use **tell**:

- Tom **told me** (that) he didn't like Brian. (*not* Tom said me . . .)

Otherwise use **say**:

- Tom **said** (that) he didn't like Brian. (*not* Tom told (that) he . . .)

Also: you can't say "Tom told about his trip to Mexico." You have to say:

- Tom **told us** (*or me/them/Ann*, etc.) about his trip to Mexico.

If you don't say who he told, you have to say:

- Tom **talked** (*or spoke*) about his trip to Mexico. (*but not* said about)

c We also use the *infinitive* (**to do/to stay**, etc.) in reported speech, especially with **tell** and **ask** (for orders and requests):

direct "Stay in bed for a few days," the doctor said to me.

reported The doctor **told me to stay** in bed for a few days.

direct "Don't shout," I said to Jim.

reported I **told Jim not to shout**.

direct "Please **don't tell** anyone what happened," Ann said to me.

reported Ann **asked me not to tell** anyone what (had) happened.

direct "Can you **open** the door for me, Tom?" Ann asked.

reported Ann **asked Tom to open** the door for her.

Said is also possible with the infinitive:

- The doctor **said to stay** in bed for a few days. (*but not* said me)