

reported speech: sentences and questions

reported sentences

direct statements	reported statements	4 33
'I like travelling.'	She said (that) she liked travelling.	
'I'm leaving tomorrow.'	He told her (that) he was leaving the next day .	
'I'll always love you.'	He said (that) he would always love me.	
'I passed the exam!'	She told me (that) she had passed the exam.	
'I've forgotten my keys.'	He said (that) he had forgotten his keys.	
'I can't come.'	She said (that) she couldn't come.	
'I may be late.'	He said (that) he might be late.	
'I must go.'	She said (that) she had to go.	

- We use reported speech to report (i.e. to tell another person) what someone said.
- When the reporting verb (*said, told*, etc.) is in the past tense, the tenses in the sentence which is being reported usually change like this:
present > past
will > *would*
past simple / present perfect > past perfect



When tenses don't change

When you report what someone said very soon after they said it, the tenses often stay the same as in the original sentence.

Adam 'I **can't come** tonight.'

*I've just spoken to Adam and he said that he **can't come** tonight.*

Jack 'I really **enjoyed** my trip.'

*Jack told me that he **really enjoyed** his trip.*

- Some modal verbs change, e.g. *can*>*could*, *may*>*might*, *must*>*had to*. Other modal verbs stay the same, e.g. *could*, *might*, *should*, etc.
- You usually have to change the pronouns, e.g. 'I like jazz.' *Jane said that **she** liked jazz.*
- Using **that** after *said* and *told* is optional.

- If you report what someone said on a different day or in a different place, some other time and place words can change, e.g. *tomorrow*>*the next day*, *here*>*there*, *this*>*that*, etc.

'I'll meet you **here tomorrow**.' He said he'd meet me **there the next day**.



say and tell

Be careful – after *said* don't use a person or an object pronoun:

He said he was tired. NOT *He said me...*

After *told* you must use a person or pronoun:

Sarah told Cally that she would call her. NOT *Sarah told that she...*

He told me he was tired. NOT *He told he was...*

reported questions

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'Are you married?' She asked him if **he was** married.

'Did she phone?' He asked me whether she **had phoned**.

'What's your name?' I asked him what his name **was**.

'Where do you live?' They asked me where I **lived**.

- When you report a question the tenses change as in reported statements.
- When a question doesn't begin with a question word, add *if* (or *whether*).
'Do you want a drink?' He asked me **if / whether** I wanted a drink.
- You also have to change the word order to subject + verb, and not use *do / did*.

2 GRAMMAR reported speech: sentences and questions

a Circle the correct answer. Tick (✓) if both are correct.

- 1 Matt said yesterday that he will / would come shopping.
- 2 We asked the sales assistant how much *it was* / *was it*.
- 3 My sister *said me* / *told me* that she had spent all her money in the sales.
- 4 I asked Lucy where *she bought* / *did she buy* her clothes.
- 5 You told me that you *may* / *might* go shopping on Saturday.
- 6 My brother asked me *if I can* / *if I could* lend him £50 until next weekend.
- 7 Kate said that she *had to* / *must* go to the supermarket.
- 8 I asked my sister *whether* / *that* the dress suited me, and she said I looked great!
- 9 Helena asked me what *I wanted* / *did I want* from the shops.
- 10 Nick said that he couldn't pay me back, because he *has forgotten* / *had forgotten* his wallet.

b Change the direct speech into reported sentences and questions.

1 I haven't been to the sales yet.

2 I hate buying clothes.

3 How much did you pay for your jacket?

4 I'll check the price online.

5 Where's the shoe department?

6 Does the shirt fit you?

- 1 Jackie said (that) she hadn't been to the sales yet.
- 2 My boyfriend told me _____.
- 3 They asked me _____.
- 4 You said _____.
- 5 I asked her _____.
- 6 The sales assistant asked me _____.