

Well, hey there!

I'm thrilled to share this workbook to help you understand and use reported speech in English. I know it can *seem* tricky - there are several small grammatical changes that need to happen so you can accurately retell what someone has said!

Ready to practise?



There are 4 simple steps to remember!

The easiest way to get it right consistently is to memorise the four steps to follow when you are reporting what someone said:

"It's my turn to play with the bike now" shouted the little girl.

1. Add a reporting clause

She shouted that it was her turn to play with the bike then.

2. Change the pronouns

She shouted that it was her turn to play with the bike then.

3. Change the time and place words

She shouted that it was her turn to play with the bike then.

4. Backshift the tenses/modal verbs

She shouted that it was her turn to play with the bike then.

In this workbook, you will find a summary of typical changes for each of these steps along with exercises to help you master each step.

Work your way through each of the steps and be sure to write your own examples. Once you have completed this workbook you can keep it as a reference guide for future study.

Common Reporting Verbs

Sentences in reported speech usually start with a reporting clause, such as

- He said that...
- They agreed that...

You'll notice that a reporting clause includes a reporting verb.

In spoken English, the most common reporting verbs are 'say', 'tell' and 'ask'.

In written English, a much wider range of reporting verbs are used! (Review the list below!)

Using one of these verbs instead of 'say' or 'tell' will make your English writing more interesting and precise!

add	cry (shout)	order
admit	demand	point out
advise	enquire	promise
agree	explain	protest
announce	hint	repeat
answer	inform	reply
ask	insist	shout
claim	interrupt	state
comment	maintain	suggest
complain	note	threaten
confess	observe	warn
confirm	offer	wonder
continue		

Remember: SAY and TELL are not equal!

- He **said** that tomorrow is a new day. (NOT: He said me that...)
- He **said to her** that tomorrow is a new day. (less common)
- He **told me** that tomorrow is a new day. (NOT: He told that ...)

Practise writing reporting clauses using different reporting verbs from the list.

The teacher explained that the assignment was due in two weeks' time.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Time and Place Words in Reported Speech

Changing the time and place words in reported speech helps to give the impression that some time has passed between when the words were spoken and when they are being reported.

See some of the typical changes to time and place words in the table below. Study the table and complete the time and place words in reported speech. The first one has been completed for you.

direct speech	reported speech
today "I'll see you later today."	that day 1. He said that he would see me later that day. Note: You can still use "today" in reported speech when the time reported is just later in the same day.
now "She needs it now."	then / at that moment / at that time 2. He said that she needed it .
yesterday "I finished the book yesterday."	that day 3. He said that he had finished the book .

direct speech	reported speech
(days / weeks / months / years) ago "He sent me a text 3 days ago."	2 days before 6 years prior 4. She said that he had sent her a text .
last week (month/year) "We met last year."	the week before, the previous week, the week prior 5. They said that they had met .
next week/month/year "What's on next week?"	the following week/month/year 6. They asked what was on .
tomorrow "Are you free tomorrow?"	the next day, the following day 7. She asked whether I was free .
here "I left my wallet here."	there 8. He said that he had left his wallet .
this "Is this your house?"	that 9. He asked if was my house.
these "These are my friends."	those 10. He said that were his friends.

REPORTED SPEECH

Pronouns

Rule number 1

First person pronouns (I, we) change to match pronoun in reporting clause (he/she/they).

He said "I want that donut"

He said that he wanted that donut"

They said, "We eat at 7."

They said that they ate at 7.

Unless that pronoun in the reporting clause is also I/we. In this case, no change is required.

I said, "I want that donut"

I said that I wanted that donut.

We said, "we eat at 7"

We said that we ate at 7.

Rule number 2

YOU in reported speech changes to match the object in the reporting clause.

He told her, "I love you".

He told her that he loved her.

She said to me, "You're in my way."

She said to me that I was in her way.

Rule number 3

Pronouns that refer to a third person are not changed in reported speech.

I said, "She's not right for this job."

I said that she wasn't right for that job.

They told me, "He's doing really well at school."

They told me that he was doing really well at school.

Study the table below and complete the pronouns in the reported speech column. The first one has been done for you.

DIRECT SPEECH	REPORTED SPEECH	EXAMPLES	
		DIRECT SPEECH	REPORTED SPEECH
I	he/she	He said, "I work in an office."	He said that he works in an office.
we	they	Rania and Mirna said, "We live in Beirut."	1. Rania and Mirna said that they live in Beirut.
you	I/he/she/we/they	She said, "You know my sister!"	2. She said that she knew her sister.
they	they	The man said, "They are stealing my car!"	3. He said that they were selling his car.
he	he	I said, "He's a friend of my brother."	4. I said that he was a friend of my brother's.
she	she	The child said, "She's my mother."	5. The child said that she wasn't her mother.
it	it	The woman said, "It's not your fault."	6. The woman said that it wasn't her fault.

Backshift Tenses & Modal Verbs

Study the table of tenses in direct and reported speech on the following page and complete the examples in reported speech.

PRESENT

direct speech

reported speech

present simple

"I wake up at 6 a.m. every morning."

past simple

1. She said that she **WOKE UP** at 6 am....

present continuous

"We're driving to the beach."

past continuous

2. They said that they **were driving**....

present perfect

"I've just made a pot of tea."

past perfect

3. He said that he **had just made**...

present perfect continuous

"He's been studying all morning."

past perfect continuous

4. She said that he **had been studying**

PAST

past simple

"I finished work early today."

past perfect

5. He said that he **had finished** work early

past continuous

"We were arguing about music."

past perfect continuous

6. They explained that they **had been argui**

past perfect

"I had just finished a good book."

no change

7. Ruby told me that she **had just finished**

past perfect continuous

"They had been driving all day."

no change

8. Tim and Jim said that they **had been driv**

REPORTED SPEECH

FUTURE

direct speech

reported speech

future (be going to)

"We're going to drive to Paris."

was/were going to

9. We told him that we

future (will)

"I'll be there at 3 p.m."

would

10. I said I

future continuous

"I'll be sipping champagne on a beach."

would

10. He said he

future perfect

"I will have swum in the ocean by then."

would

12. Jenny said that she

future perfect continuous

"They will have been shopping for hours."

would

13. Emma supposed that they

MODALS

can / could

"I can see the sea from here!"

could

14. I said that I

may / might

"I may be late tonight."

might

15. Mary informed us that she

shall / should

"Shall we go to the cinema?"

should

16. He asked whether we

must

"You must turn left here."

must / had to

17. He told me that I

mustn't

"You mustn't be late!"

mustn't

18. She said that we

have to

"She has to work late tonight."

had to

19. She informed us that she

REPORTED SPEECH

Answers:

Reporting verbs:

Many of the reporting verbs from the list could be used in this sentence, here are some examples:

1. The teacher said that the assignment was due in two weeks' time.
2. The teacher insisted that the assignment was due in two weeks' time.
3. The teacher pointed out that the assignment was due in two weeks' time.
4. The teacher informed the students that the assignment was due in two weeks' time. → Note: the verb "inform" takes an object i.e "the students" in this example
5. The teacher announced that the assignment was due in two weeks' time.

Time and Place words:

1. He said that he would see me later that day/ today.
2. He said that she needed it then/at that moment/at that time.
3. He said that he had finished the book the day before/ previous day.
4. She said that he had sent her a text 3 days before/prior.
5. They said that they had met the year before/prior.
6. They asked what was on the following/next week.
7. He said that he had left his wallet there.
8. He asked if that was my house.
9. He said that those were his friends.

Pronouns:

1. Rania and Mirna said that they live in Beirut.
2. She said that I/he/she/we/they knew her sister.
3. He said that they were selling his car.
4. I said that he was a friend of my brother's.
5. The child said that she wasn't her mother.
6. The woman said that it wasn't her fault.

Backshift:

1. She said that she woke up at 6 a.m. every morning.
2. They said that they were driving to the beach.
3. He said that he had just made a pot of tea.
4. She said that he had been studying all morning.
5. He told us that he had finished work early today/that day.
6. They explained that they had been arguing about music.
7. Ruby told me that she had just finished a good book.
8. Tim and Jim said that they had been driving all day.
9. We told him that we were going to drive to Paris.
10. I said I would be there at 3 p.m.
11. He said he would be sipping champagne on a beach by that time.
12. Jenny said that she would have swum in the ocean by that time.
13. Emma supposed that they would have been shopping for hours.
14. I said that I could see the sea from there!
15. Mary informed us that she might be late tonight/that night.
16. He asked whether we should go to the cinema. → Note that questions follow statement word order in reported speech (subject + verb + object)
17. He told me that I had to/must turn left there.
18. She said that we mustn't be late.
19. She informed us that she had to work late tonight/that night.