Reported speech

Direct speech is when we quote a person's exact words.

Jim says, "I like my job."

Indirect speech is when a 2nd person recounts what that person said to a 3rd person

Jim said that he liked his job.

When we report speech, we change the tense of the reporting verb to the past tense and then we also have to change the tense of the verb in the statement. We also have to change the pronoun and the time expression:

Jim says," I am going to Paris tomorrow."

Jim said (that) he was going to Paris the next day. ● ● ●

We never say:
Jim said me

Here is a table with the verb tense changes:

Tense in direct speech		Tense change in indirect/reported speech	
Present simple	"I have a meeting at 2 o'clock."	Past simple	He said he had a meeting at 2 o'clock.
Present continuous	My boss is talking on the telephone.	Past continuous	He said his boss was talking on the telephone.
Past simple	We sent the goods.	Past perfect or past simple	They said they had sent the goods. They said they sent the goods.
Past continuous	She was printing a copy.	Past perfect continuous	She said she had been printing a copy.
Present perfect	He has finished the report	Past perfect	He said he had finished the report.
Future - will	They will increase the price	Becomes - would	They said they would increase the price
Must,	Everyone must work on Saturday.	Stays the same or becomes – had to	He said that everyone must work on Saturday. He said that everyone had to work that Saturday.
should, might, could, would	You should go to the dentist	Stays the same	She said you should go to the dentist.

There is no time change if the information is still true:

"There is always a period of uncertainty after a merger". He said there is always a period of uncertainty after a merger.

"The campaign was a huge success". She said the campaign was a huge success.

Time and place expression changes:

now	Then, at that time
today	That day, last Monday
yesterday	The previous day, the day before
tomorrow	The following day, the next day

Last week	The previous week, the week before
A few days ago	A few days before, a few days earlier
yet	already
here	there

Exercises

Rewrite the sentences in reported speech:

1. "I won't put it in the January sales because it's selling very well," he said.

   He said that _____.

2. She said, "I've read the report, but I don't understand section 4.

   She told me _____.

3. "I'm preparing the figures, but I won't be long," he said.

   He said that _____.

4. " I like tennis, I don't play very often," he said.

   He said _____.

5. "I'm going to visit our Madrid subsidiary, but I'm not sure when," she said.

   She told me _____.

Write the actual words that each person says. Use contractions where possible:

1. Claudia said she would be back after lunch.

   "_____, " Claudia said.

2. Bill said he was going to contact head office the next day.

   "_____." Bill said.

3. My boss said he would give me a bonus if I reached the sales target.

   "_____, " said my boss.

Reporting Questions:

For yes/no questions we use if / whether and the verb tense changes are the same as in normal

statements:

"Do you like your job?"   She asked me if I liked my job.

"Have you finished the report yet?"   He asked me if I had already finished the report.

For Wh questions, the verb tense changes are the same as for a statement:

"What time do you finish work?"   She asked me what time I finished work. (**Not – what time I did finish**)

"Where are you going on holiday?"   She asked me where I was going on holiday.

"Why did you leave early?"   She asked me why I left early.

Reporting commands and requests:

We use tell and the infinitive:

"Take us to the airport"   She told him to take them to the airport.

"Don't worry, I'll deal with it."   He told me not to worry and that he would deal with it.

"Please wait for a moment?"   He asked me to wait for a moment.

Exercices:

Rewrite the sentences in reported speech. Write if for yes/no questions:

1   " What do the letters URL mean?" I asked him

    I asked him _____.

2   "Did you remember to back up the file?" she asked him.

    She asked him _____.

3   "How much did you pay for your car?" I asked Jim.

    I asked Jim _____.