

National Division  
 English Department  
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## The Reported Speech

### Reported Statements

When do we use reported speech? Sometimes someone says a sentence, for example "I'm going to the cinema tonight". Later, maybe we want to tell someone else what the first person said.

#### Here's how it works:

We use a 'reporting verb' like 'say' or 'tell'. If this verb is in the present tense, it's easy. We just put 'she says' and then the sentence:

- Direct speech: I like ice cream.
- Reported speech: She **says** (that) she **likes** ice cream.

We don't need to change the tense, though probably we do need to change the 'person' from 'I' to 'she', for example. We also may need to change words like 'my' and 'your'.

(As I'm sure you know, often, we can choose if we want to use 'that' or not in English. I've put it in brackets () to show that it's optional. It's exactly the same if you use 'that' or if you don't use 'that'.)

**But**, if the reporting verb is in the past tense, then usually we change the tenses in the reported speech:

- Direct speech: I like ice cream.
- Reported speech: She **said** (that) she **liked** ice cream.

Tense	Direct Speech	Reported Speech
present simple	I like ice cream	She said (that) she liked ice cream.
present continuous	I am living in London	She said (that) she was living in London.
past simple	I bought a car	She said (that) she had bought a car OR She said (that) she bought a car.

past continuous	I was walking along the street	She said (that) she had been walking along the street.
present perfect	I haven't seen Julie	She said (that) she hadn't seen Julie.
past perfect*	I had taken English lessons before	She said (that) she had taken English lessons before.
will	I'll see you later	She said (that) she would see me later.
would*	I would help, but..”	She said (that) she would help but...
can	I can speak perfect English	She said (that) she could speak perfect English.
could*	I could swim when I was four	She said (that) she could swim when she was four.
shall	I shall come later	She said (that) she would come later.
should*	I should call my mother	She said (that) she should call her mother
might*	I might be late	She said (that) she might be late
must	I must study at the weekend	She said (that) she must study at the weekend OR She said she had to study at the weekend

\* doesn't change.

Occasionally, we don't need to change the present tense into the past if the information in direct speech is still true (but this is only for things which are general facts, and even then usually we like to change the tense):

- Direct speech: The sky is blue.
- Reported speech: She said (that) the sky **is/was** blue.

### Reported Questions

So now you have no problem with making reported speech from positive and negative sentences. But how about questions?

- Direct speech: Where do you live?

How can we make the reported speech here?

In fact, it's not so different from reported statements. The tense changes are the same, and we keep the question word. The very important thing though is that, once we tell the question to someone else, it isn't a question any more. So we need to change the grammar to a normal positive sentence. A bit confusing? Maybe this example will help:

- Direct speech: Where do you live?
- Reported speech: She asked me where I lived.

Do you see how I made it? The direct question is in the present simple tense. We make a present simple question with 'do' or 'does' so I need to take that away. Then I need to change the verb to the past simple.

Another example:

- Direct speech: Where is Julie?
- Reported speech: She asked me where Julie was.

The direct question is the present simple of 'be'. We make the question form of the present simple of be by inverting (changing the position of)the subject and verb. So, we need to change them back before putting the verb into the past simple.

Here are some more examples:

<b>Direct Question</b>	<b>Reported Question</b>
Where is the Post Office, please?	She asked me where the Post Office was.
What are you doing?	She asked me what I was doing.
Who was that fantastic man?	She asked me who that fantastic man had been.

So much for 'wh' questions. But, what if you need to report a 'yes / no' question? We don't have any question words to help us. Instead, we use '**if**':

- Direct speech: Do you like chocolate?
- Reported speech: She asked me **if** I liked chocolate.

No problem? Here are a few more examples:

Direct Question	Reported Question
Do you love me?	He asked me if I loved him.
Have you ever been to Mexico?	She asked me if I had ever been to Mexico.
Are you living here?	She asked me if I was living here.

### Reported Requests

There's more! What if someone asks you to do something (in a polite way)? For example:

- Direct speech: Close the window, please
- Or: Could you close the window please?
- Or: Would you mind closing the window please?

All of these requests mean the same thing, so we don't need to report every word when we tell another person about it. We simply use '**ask me + to + infinitive**':

- Reported speech: She asked me to close the window.

Here are a few more examples:

Direct Request	Reported Request
Please help me.	She asked me to help her.
Please don't smoke.	She asked me not to smoke.
Could you bring my book tonight?	She asked me to bring her book that night.
Could you pass the milk, please?	She asked me to pass the milk.
Would you mind coming early tomorrow?	She asked me to come early the next day.

To report a negative request, use 'not':

- Direct speech: Please don't be late.
- Reported speech: She asked us **not** to be late.

### Reported Orders

And finally, how about if someone doesn't ask so politely? We can call this an 'order' in English, when someone tells you very directly to do something. For example:

- Direct speech: Sit down!

In fact, we make this into reported speech in the same way as a request. We just use 'tell' instead of 'ask':

- Reported speech: She told me to sit down.

### **Direct Order   Reported Order**

Go to bed!      He told the child to go to bed.

Don't worry!    He told her not to worry.

Be on time!     He told me to be on time.

                         He told us not to smoke.  
Don't smoke!

### **Time Expressions with Reported Speech**

Sometimes when we change direct speech into reported speech we have to change time expressions too. We don't always have to do this, however. It depends on when we heard the direct speech and when we say the reported speech.

For example:

It's Monday. Julie says "I'm leaving **today**".

If I tell someone on Monday, I say "Julie said she was leaving **today**".

If I tell someone on Tuesday, I say "Julie said she was leaving **yesterday**".

If I tell someone on Wednesday, I say "Julie said she was leaving **on Monday**".

If I tell someone a month later, I say "Julie said she was leaving **that day**".

So, there's no easy conversion. You really have to think about when the

direct speech was said.

**Here's a table of some possible conversions:**

Direct speech	Reported speech
Now	then / at that time
Ago	before
This (for time)	that
Today	that day, on Sunday, yesterday
Tonight	that night, last night, on Sunday night
Tomorrow	the next/following day, on Sunday, today
The day after tomorrow	in two days time/ two days later
Yesterday	the day before/the previous day, on Sunday
The day before yesterday	two days before
Last night	the night before/the previous night, on Sunday night
This week	that week, last week
Last week/month/year	the previous/week/month/year
Next week/month/year	the following week/month
Two minutes ago	two minutes before
In one hour	one hour later
Here	there

**Change these direct questions into reported speech:**

1. "Where is he?" She asked me

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2. "What are you doing?" She asked me

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3. "Why did you go out last night?" She asked me

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4. "Who was that beautiful woman?" She asked me

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5. "How is your mother?" She asked me

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6. "What are you going to do at the weekend?" She asked me

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7. "Where will you live after graduation?" She asked me

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8. "What were you doing when I saw you?" She asked me

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9. "How was the journey?" She asked me

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10. "How often do you go to the cinema?" She asked me

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11. "Do you live in London?" She asked me

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12. "Did he arrive on time?" She asked me

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13. "Have you been to Paris?" She asked me

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14. "Can you help me?" She asked me

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15. "Are you working tonight?" She asked me

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16. "Will you come later?" She asked me

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17. "Do you like coffee?" She asked me

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18. "Is this the road to the station?" She asked me

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19. "Did you do your homework?" She asked me

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20. "Have you studied reported speech before?" She asked me

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