

# REPORTED SPEECH

S study the following examples :

## A. Imperatives

DIRECT SPEECH: (BURSAR to STUDENT):  
"Sign your name here, please!"

REPORTED SPEECH: The bursar told the student to sign his name there.

DIRECT SPEECH: (TEACHER to STUDENT):  
"Don't be late again!"

REPORTED SPEECH: The teacher told the student not to be late again.

## B. Statements

DIRECT SPEECH: "I can't remember where I've put the file."

REPORTED SPEECH: 1. He **says** (that) he can't remember where he's put the file.

2. He **said** (that) he couldn't remember where he'd put the file.

## C. WH-Questions

DIRECT SPEECH: "Where can I register as a standby passenger?"

REPORTED SPEECH: 1. He **asks** where he can register as a standby passenger.

2. He **asked** where he could register as a standby passenger.

#### D. Yes-No Questions

DIRECT SPEECH: "Are there any seats still available?"

REPORTED SPEECH: 1. He **asks** if there are any seats still available.

2. He **asked** if there were any seats still available.

#### E. Suggestions

DIRECT SPEECH: "Let's go on an excursion to the seaside, shall we?"

REPORTED SPEECH: My friends suggested going to the seaside.

In changing a direct **imperative** or **request** into reported speech, we use an appropriate reporting verb like "tell," "ask," "order," "warn," "command," etc. We also use the infinitive of the verb + "to" for reporting positive commands or requests; we use "not to" + the infinitive for reporting negative imperatives or requests.

In changing a direct **statement** into reported speech, we use an appropriate reporting verb. Following is a list of reporting verbs commonly used in reporting statements:

say	answer	continue	agree
tell	reply	declare	complain
explain	add	state	suggest
claim	announce	promise	shout
admit	conclude	insist	exclaim

Perhaps the two verbs most commonly used are "say" and "tell".

In changing a direct **question** into an indirect (reported) one, we use a reporting verb like "ask," "inquire," and "want to know". It is important to note that the word order of a direct question differs from that of an indirect or a reported one. A direct question shows inversion of subject and verb; an indirect question shows no inversion. Again, in reporting a yes-no question, we use "if" or "whether".

The tense of the reporting verb is important in determining whether or not the tense of the original speech must be changed. When the tense of the reporting verb is PRESENT, or FUTURE, there is no change of tense in the reported speech. However, if the tense of the reporting verb is PAST or PAST PERFECT, a change of is usual in reported speech. The following examples illustrate when the tenses of the direct speech remain unchanged and when they have to be changed in reported speech.

A. REPORTED SPEECH WITH THE REPORTING VERB IN THE PRESENT (OR FUTURE) :

Direct Speech

Reported Speech

He says, "*They have finished it*"

He says (that) they have finished it.

Note that the Present Perfect "have finished" has remained unchanged.

He has said, "*They live in Abha.*"

He has said (that) they live in Abha.

Note that the Simple Present "live" has remained unchanged.

He will say, "*It is legitimate.*"

He will say (that) it is legitimate.

Note that the Simple Present "is" has remained unchanged.

He asks, "*When did the accident happen?*"

He asks when the accident happened.

Note that the Simple Past in the Direct Speech has remained Simple Past in the Reported Speech.

In all the above examples, the tense of the Direct Speech has remained unchanged in the Reported Speech. This is because the reporting verb ("says," "has said," "will say," "asks") is in the Present or Future.

**B. REPORTED SPEECH WITH THE REPORTING VERB IN THE PAST :**

**Direct Speech**

He said, "*They have finished it.*"

He had said, "*They live in Abha.*"

He asked, "*When did the accident happen?*"

He said to me, "*How long have you been waiting?*"

**Reported Speech**

He said (that) they had finished it.

Note that the Present Perfect "have finished" has changed into the Past Perfect "had finished".

He had said (that) they lived in Abha.

Note that the Simple Present "live" has changed into the Simple Past "lived".

He asked when the accident (had) happened.

Note that the Simple Past "did . . . happen" often changes into the Past Perfect "had happened".

He asked me how long I had been waiting. Note that the Present Perfect Continuous has changed into the Past Perfect Continuous.

He said, *"I'm not feeling very well."*

He told me (that) he wasn't feeling very well.

Note that Present Continuous has changed into the Past Continuous.

He said, *"There will be economic problems later on."*

He stated that there would be economic problems later on.

Note that the Future "will be" has changed into the Conditional "would be".

He said, *"They had performed Pilgrimage before."*

He said that they had performed Pilgrimage before.

Note that the Past Perfect "had performed" has remained unchanged.

In the above examples (except the last one), the tense of the Direct Speech has changed in the Reported Speech. This is because the reporting verb ("said," "had said," "asked," "told," "stated") is in the Past. Following is a list of tense changes when the reporting verb is in the Past:

### Direct Speech

Simple Present  
Present Continuous  
Present Perfect  
Present Perfect Continuous  
Future  
Future Continuous  
Simple Past  
Past Perfect

### Reported Speech

Simple Past  
Past Continuous  
Past Perfect  
Past Perfect Continuous  
Conditional  
Conditional Continuous  
Past Perfect (in written English)  
Past Perfect (no change)

*Pronouns* may need to be changed according to the context. Thus “you”, for example, may have to be changed into “I/me,” “we/us,” “they/them,” etc. — depending on the relation between the person reporting the speech and the person being addressed as “you” in the Direct Speech.

*Adverbials* may or may not change according to the situation. For example, “here” may either remain unchanged (if the speech is reported in the same place) or be changed into “there” (if the speech is reported in a place different from that referred to in the original speech).

Concerning *adverbials of time*, “today,” “yesterday,” and “tomorrow” remain *unchanged* if the speech is reported on the *same* day as that on which it was originally said. If, on the other hand, the speech is reported on a different day, there will be changes. If the speech is reported one day later, “today,” “tomorrow,” and “yesterday” become “yesterday,” “today,” and “the day before yesterday,” respectively. If the speech is reported *several days later*, there will be changes as follows:

**Direct Speech**

**Reported Speech**

today

that day

tomorrow

the next day (or the following day)

yesterday

the day before

** Exercise 35**

A. Change the following direct statements into Reported Speech, using an appropriate reporting verb in the Present:

1. (ALI): “My nephew has been working on his doctoral dissertation since his proposal was approved.”
2. (OMAR): “I was travelling on the Underground when I ran into an old schoolfriend of mine.”

3. (SAMI): "I've never been abroad."
4. (AMER): "I arrived on Friday and found the dormitory closed."
5. (BAKR): "After they had finished circumambulating the Holy Ka'ba, they offered a two-rak`a prayer."

B. Do Exercise 35/A again, using a reporting verb in the Past.



### Exercise 36

A. Change the following direct questions into Reported Speech, beginning with "He is asking....":

1. When is the plane scheduled to land?
2. When does the next flight leave for Damascus?
3. Where is the international departure lounge?
4. What is the gate number for the next flight to Algiers?
5. Who is in charge of excess baggage?

B. Change the following direct questions into Reported Speech, beginning with "My colleague wanted to know....":

1. What elective courses are you going to take this semester?
2. What is the deadline for turning in our essays?
3. How many chapters have you covered so far?
4. What topics did the professor discuss yesterday? (Assume that the sentence was reported several days later).
5. Who can I address this petition to?

## Exercise 37

A. Change the following direct questions into Reported Speech, beginning with "He wonders if....":

1. Do I have to use this medication for a long time?
2. Does the cardiologist have a clinic on Thursday?
3. Is it time for vaccinating the baby?
4. Do you have a file at Asir Central Hospital?
5. Have you made an appointment with the orthopedist?

B. Do Exercise 37/A again, using a reporting verb in the past.

## Exercise 38

A. Put the following imperatives into Reported Speech :

1. Take three tablespoonfuls of this syrup a day!
2. Do not eat too much fat!
3. See the O.P.D. for the next appointment!
4. Follow the instructions carefully!
5. Do not exceed the recommended dose!

B. Report the following suggestions, using the verb SUGGEST followed by THAT... SHOULD (or by an -ing form) :

1. Why don't you bring up the subject now?
2. What about nominating Mr. X for the Extracurricular Activities Committee?
3. Well, how about meeting on Thursday afternoon instead?
4. Why not audit the course, then?
5. Let's call for the doctor!