

REPORTED SPEECH

DIRECT AND INDIRECT (OR REPORTED) SPEECH. INTRODUCTION

There are two ways of relating what a person has said: direct and indirect.

In direct speech we repeat the original speaker's exact words:

He said, "I have lost my umbrella."

Remarks thus repeated are placed between inverted commas, and a comma is placed immediately before the remark. Direct speech is found in conversations in books, in plays and in quotations.

In indirect speech we give the exact meaning of a remark or a speech, without necessarily using the speaker's exact words:

He said (that) he had lost his umbrella.

There is no comma after **say** in indirect speech. **that** can usually be omitted after **say** and **tell** + object. But it should be kept after other verbs: **complain**, **explain**, **object**, **point out**, **protest** etc. Indirect speech is normally used when conversation is reported verbally, though direct speech is sometimes here to give a more dramatic effect.

When we turn direct speech into indirect, some changes are usually necessary.

PRONOUNS AND ADJECTIVES: CHANGES NECESSARY

- A. First and second person pronouns and possessive adjectives normally change to the third person except when the speaker is reporting his own words. (I = he, she; me = him, her; my = his, her; mine = his, hers; we = they...)

She said, "he's my son". → She said that he was her son.

"I'm ill", she said. → She said that she was ill.

- B. **THIS / THESE**

This used in time expressions usually becomes **that**.

She said, "She's coming this week". → She said that she was coming that week.

This and **that** used as adjectives usually change to **the**.

He said, "I bought this pearl/these pearls for my mother". →

He said that he had bought the pearl/the pearls for his mother.

This, these used as pronouns can become **it, they/them**.

He came back with two knives and said, "I found these beside the king's bed". → He said he had found them beside the king's bed.

He said, "We will discuss this tomorrow". → He said that they would discuss it (the matter) the next day.

EXPRESSIONS OF TIME AND PLACE IN INDIRECT SPEECH

- A. Adverbs and adverbial phrases of time change as follows:

DIRECT SPEECH	INDIRECT SPEECH
today	that day
yesterday	the day before
the day before yesterday	two days before
tomorrow	the next day/the following day
the day after tomorrow	in two day's time
next week/year etc.	the following week/year etc.
last week/year etc.	the previous week/year etc.
a year etc. ago	a year before/the previous year

"I saw her the day before yesterday", he said. → He said he'd seen her two days before.

"I'll do it tomorrow", he promised. → He promised that he would do it the next day. She said, "My father died a year ago". → She said that her father had died a year before/the previous year.

- B. But if the speech is made and reported on the same day these time changes are not necessary:
At breakfast this morning he said, "I'll be very busy today". → At breakfast this morning he said that he would be very busy today.
- C. **here** can become **there** but only when it is clear what place is meant:
At the station he said, "I'll be here again tomorrow". → He said that he'd be there again the next day.

Usually **here** has to be replaced by some phrase:

She said, "You can sit here, Tom". → She told Tom that he could sit beside her.

STATEMENTS IN INDIRECT SPEECH: TENSE CHANGES NECESSARY

- A. Indirect speech can be introduced by a verb in a present tense: *He says that ...* This is usual when we are:
- reporting a conversation that is still going on
 - reading a letter and reporting what it says
 - reading instructions and reporting them
 - reporting a statement that someone makes very often, e.g. *Tom says that he'll never get married.*

When the introductory verb is in a present, present perfect or future tense we can report the direct speech without any change of tense:

PAUL (phoning from the station): *I'm trying to get a taxi.*

ANN (to Mary, who is standing beside her): *Paul says he is trying to get a taxi.*

- B. But indirect speech is usually introduced by a verb in the past tense. Verbs in the direct speech have then to be changed into a corresponding past tense. The changes are shown in the following table.

DIRECT SPEECH	INDIRECT SPEECH
Simple Present <i>"I never eat meat", he explained.</i>	Simple Past <i>= He explained (that) he never ate meat.</i>
Present Continuous <i>"I'm waiting for Ann", he said.</i>	Past Continuous <i>= He said (that) he was waiting for Ann.</i>
Present Perfect <i>"I have found a flat", he said.</i>	Past Perfect <i>= He said (that) he had found a flat.</i>
Present Perfect Continuous <i>He said, "I've been waiting for ages".</i>	Past Perfect Continuous <i>= He said (that) he had been waiting for ages.</i>
Simple Past <i>"I took it home with me", she said.</i>	Past Perfect <i>= She said (that) he had taken it home with her.</i>
Future <i>He said, "I will/shall be in Paris on Monday".</i>	Conditional <i>= He said (that) he would be in Paris on Monday.</i>
Future Continuous <i>"I will/shall be using the car myself on the 24h", she said.</i>	Conditional Continuous <i>= She said (that) she'd been using the car herself on the 24th.</i>
Conditional <i>I said, "I would like to see it".</i>	Conditional <i>= I said (that) I would like to see it.</i>