

REPORTED SPEECH - A Summary

1. What is reported Speech?

There are two ways of telling one person what another person has said:

- Direct Speech, where you use the speakers exact words and put them in quotation marks:

She said, “I want to go home” and left.

- Indirect or Reported Speech, where we make the speakers words part of our own sentence and change pronouns, tenses etc., where necessary:

She said that she wanted to go home and left.

2. How to use Reported Speech

If you have a sentence in Direct Speech, try to follow these 5 steps to put the sentence into Reported Speech..

1. Define the type of the sentence (statement, questions, command)
2. What tense is used in the introductory sentence?
3. Do you have to change the person (pronoun)?
4. Do you have to backshift the tenses?
5. Do you have to change expressions of time and place?

3. The introductory sentence

If you use Reported Speech there are mostly two main differences.

The introductory sentence in Reported Speech can be in the Present or in the Past.

If the introductory sentences is in the Simple Present, there is *no backshift* of tenses.

Direct Speech:

- Peter: “John plays tennis.”

Reported Speech:

- Introductory sentence in the Simple Present → Peter says (that)* John plays tennis.
- Introductory sentence in the Simple Past → Peter said (that)* John played tennis.

4. Change of persons/pronouns

If there is a pronoun in Direct Speech, it may need to be changed in Reported Speech, depending on the situation.

- Direct Speech → John: “**I** drive to work.”
- Reported Speech → John said (that)* **he** drove to work.

Here **I** is changed to **he**.

5. Backshift of tenses

If there is backshift of tenses in Reported Speech, the tenses are shifted the following way.

- Direct Speech → Susan: “**I work** in London.”
- Reported Speech → Susan said (that)* **she worked** in London.

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Simple forms	
Present Simple	Past Simple
Past Simple	Past Perfect
Present Perfect	
Past Perfect	
will	would
Continuous forms	
am/are/is	was/were
was/were	had been
has been	
had been	

6. Changing expressions of time and place

If there is an expression of time/place in the sentence, it may need to be changed, depending on the situation.

- Direct Speech → John: “I drove to work **yesterday**.”
- Reported Speech → John said (that) he had driven to work **the day before**.

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
this evening	that evening
today/this day	that day

these days	those days
now	then
a week ago	a week before
last weekend	the weekend before / the previous weekend
next week	the following week
tomorrow	the next/following day
here	there

8. Additional information

In some cases backshift of tenses is not necessary, e.g. when statements are still true. However *backshifting of tenses is never wrong*.

- John: “New York is bigger than Paris.”
- John said (that)* New York **was** bigger than Paris. or
- John said (that)* New York **is** bigger than Paris.

* The word *that* is optional, that is why it is in brackets.