

## Reported Speech

### Introduction

1) When we want to tell somebody what someone else has said we can use either direct speech (exact words in quotation marks) or indirect speech (also called reported speech). The latter variant is more common.

*Liz said, 'I work as a nanny'. (direct speech)*

*Liz said that **she works as a nanny**. (reported speech)*

2) In reported speech the reporting verb can stay in the present simple if the original words are still true or repeated very often.

***Pam always tells me that she is going to get a gym membership.***

If something is no longer true or happened some time ago, there is a backshift of tenses in reported speech (e.g. we use the past simple instead of the present simple). Study the following table:

Backshift of Tenses	Direct Speech	Reported Speech
present simple → past simple	I like this movie.	Kate told me that she liked that movie.
present continuous → past continuous	I'm working on the important project.	Jim said that he was working on the important project.
past simple → past perfect	We bought a house.	The Smiths said that they had bought a house.
present perfect → past perfect	I have known Mr. Ola for ages.	Peter claimed that he had known Mr. Ola for ages.
present perfect continuous → past perfect continuous	I have been waiting for you for an hour!	Mike complained that he had been waiting for me for an hour.
past continuous → past perfect continuous	We were working day and night.	They told me that they had been working day and night.
will → would	I will see you tomorrow!	Andrew told me that he would see me the following day.
can → could	Can you open this jar?	Betty asked me if I could open that jar.

Note that we also need to change time/place expressions and demonstratives in reported speech.

Indirect Speech	Reported Speech
today	that day
now	then
yesterday	the day before
... days ago	... days before
last week	the week before
next year	the following year
tomorrow	the next/following day
here	there
this	that
these	those

The structure of the reported clause depends on whether we are reporting a statement, a question, or an imperative:

a) statements consist of a reporting clause and a reported clause beginning with *that* (although we can omit *that* in informal speech).

*My sister told me (**that**) she wanted to move to China for a year.*

b) *yes-no* questions and questions with *or* consist of a reporting clause and a reported clause beginning with *if/whether*. Note that the reported clause does not retain the word order of questions; use *if/whether* + *subject* + *verb* instead.

*My boss asked me **if/whether** I had written the report on Thursday.*

*My boss asked me **if/whether** I had written the report on Thursday or Friday.*

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*Wh*-questions consist of a reporting clause and a reported clause beginning a *wh*-word (*who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, or *how*). Note that the reported clause does not retain the word order of questions; use *if/whether* + *subject* + *verb* instead.

*Jack wanted to know **what happened to our colleague.***

*The police was investigating **who lived in that building.***

c) imperatives consist of a reporting clause and a reported clause beginning with (*not*) *to* + *infinitive*.

*My mom told me **not to come home very late.** She also asked me **to buy some bread.***

### Short Story Dialogue

– *How did the meeting go?*

– *Well, our boss told us that he had been researching the current market and he had found an additional source of funding.*

– *And what will you be doing now? Will your tasks change?*

– *He stated that some of us would be working on new projects the following month but he couldn't disclose any details at that time.*

**Independent Practice - Reported Speech**

**1) Find mistakes in the following sentences.**

- a. Sarah was complaining that she had spend a month looking for an apartment.
- b. They asked me if did I want to sign up for free.
- c. Peter told to me that they were going to Bali.
- d. It was stated that the meeting will be called off.
- e. Bill told me that he had never be abroad.

**2) Write sentences in reported speech.**

a. My parents said to me, 'Don't worry!'
.....
b. 'I'm busy looking for an apartment now', Kelly said.
.....
c. 'Why weren't you at the party?', he asked.
.....
d. It is written, 'Mr. A. will launch a new project'.
.....
e. Phillip asked, 'Jane, do you want to go to the movies with me?'.
.....

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## Independent Practice: Answers - Reported Speech

### 1) Find mistakes in the following sentences.

- a. Sarah was complaining that she had ~~spend~~ **spent** a month looking for an apartment.
- b. They asked me if ~~did I want~~ **I wanted** to sign up for free.
- c. Peter told ~~to me~~ **me** that they were going to Bali.
- d. It was stated that the meeting ~~will be~~ **would be** called off.
- e. Bill told me that he had never ~~be~~ **been** abroad.

### 2) Write sentences in reported speech.

- a. My parents told me not to worry.
- b. Kelly said that she was busy looking for an apartment then.
- c. He asked me why I hadn't been at the party.
- d. It was written that Mr. A. would launch a new project.
- e. Phillip asked Jane if she wanted to go to the movies with him.