# One Point English Now English Helpdesk

## August 2023: Reported Speech Intermediate OPEN

# Direct Speech  vs  Indirect Speech

**"I'll fix the problem."**

**"Tanaka-san said he would fix the problem."**

# Direct and Indirect Speech

In business, it's important that we can report clearly to someone what another person has said.

We can do this in two ways, using **direct** speech or **indirect (reported)** speech.

**Direct speech**: "I **play** tennis on Saturdays", said Bill.

**Indirect speech**: Bill said that he **played** tennis on Saturdays.

*Let's take a closer look!*

# Basic Guidelines: Reported Speech

In reported speech, we usually use change the tense of the main verb, moving it back, one tense, in time.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Present simple => Past simple | I like my job. | She said (that) she liked her job. |
| Present continuous => Past continuous | We are working from home. | They said they were working from home. |
| Present perfect => Past perfect | I haven't finished my work. | He said (that) he hadn't finished his work. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Past simple => Past perfect simple | I went to Kyoto. | He said (that) he'd been to Kyoto. |
| Past continuous => Past perfect continuous | I was talking to Jim in Boise. | She said she'd been talking to Jim in Boise. |
| *Past perfect => Past perfect | *I had already eaten dinner.* | *He said (that) he had already eaten dinner.* |

\*  **Exceptions**

When the information being reported is in the present tense, is related to general facts and the information is still true, we don't need to change the tense (*but we often do change it anyway!*).

"My name is Steve."  =>  He said (that) his name **is / was** Steve.

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## Pronouns

Something else that we usually need to change is pronouns. However, if you are reporting what you said yourself, then the pronouns don't need to change *(see the final example).*

| | |
|---|---|
| *I* like listening to music. *(said Bill)* | Bill said (that) *he* liked listening to music. |
| *We* are going to Okinawa for *our* holiday. | She told me (that) *they* were going to Okinawa for *their* holiday. |
| *I*'m reading a great book about art. | I told her (that) *I* was reading a great book about art. |

## Demonstratives and Adverbs of Place & Time

If they are no longer accurate, we also need to change demonstratives and adverbs of place and time.

| | |
|---|---|
| **This** is my office, she said. | She said **that** was her office. |
| I like working **here**, he said. | He said he liked working **there**. |
| I have to attend a meeting later **today**, she said. | She said she had to attend a meeting later **that day**. |
| I have to give a presentation **tomorrow**, he said. | He said he had to give a presentation **the next/following day**. |
| I had to finish my report **yesterday**, she said. | She said (that) she had had to finish her report **the previous day**. |

## Modal Verbs

| Will   =>   would | I**'ll** see you later. | She said (that) she **would** see me later. |
|---|---|---|
| Can   =>   could | I **can** play the piano. | He said (that) he **could** play the piano. |
| ***Would, Could, Should and Might*** | *I would like to go, but …* | *She said (that) she would like to go, but …* |
| ***These modal verbs don't change*** | *I might be late.* | *He said (that) he might be late.* |
| ***Must   =>   must / had to*** | *I must finish my report.* | *He said (that) he **must** finish his report.* **OR** *He said (that) he **had to** finish his report.* |

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- **'say' and 'tell'**

  If you want to mention the person who was spoken to, use 'tell'; otherwise, use 'say':

  > He **said** (that) he needed to buy a new car.

  > He **told me** (that) he needed to buy a new car.

- **Other reporting verbs**

  Other verbs you can use instead of '**say**' include: *'agree', 'reply', 'explain', 'admit', 'suggest', 'complain'*

  He **said** (that) he needed to buy a new car.

  > He **explained** (that) he needed to buy a new car.

  > He **admitted** (that) he needed to buy a new car.

  > He **complained** (that) he needed to buy a new car.

# Reporting Questions

**Information ("Wh") Questions**

In what, where, why, who, when or how questions, we use the question word to report the question.
When reporting questions, the most common reporting verb is 'ask'. We usually state *who* was asked.
When reporting questions, we <span style="color:red">don't use the auxiliary verb 'do'.</span>

| Where's the meeting room? | He asked *me* where the meeting room was. |
|---|---|
| What time does the presentation start? | She asked *him* what time ~~does~~ the presentation started. |

**Yes/No Questions**

In yes/no questions, we use 'if' or 'whether' to report the question. 'If' is much more common.

| Are you still working from home? | He asked me *if* I was still working from home. |
|---|---|
| Are you going to the conference in Tokyo? | She asked me *whether* I was going to the conference in Tokyo. |

# Workshop Activity

Using the prompts in parentheses (), change the following direct speech sentences into indirect (reported) speech

**Examples**

1. Mary: "I've almost finished writing my presentation." *(say)*      Mary said (that) she had almost finished writing her presentation.

2. Jim (to Amy): "I'm going to Boise tomorrow." *(tell)*      Jim told Mary (that) he was going to Boise the following day.

3. Bill (to me): "Do you need any help?" *(ask)*      Bill asked me if I needed any help.

1. **Kenta: "I worked in Boise for 5 months." *(say)***

2. **Ayane (to Reina): "I can play piano and violin." *(tell)***

3. **Diane: "I will give my presentation at 3 o'clock this afternoon." *(say)***

4. **Kazuyoshi (to Akira): "What are you doing?" *(ask)***

5. **Dave (to Ken): "I should have studied harder for the exam." *(tell)***

6. **Ann: "I will have to go home early." *(explain)***

7. **John: "I have to work every weekend." *(complain)***

8. **James: "There is a big problem with the production schedule." *(admit)***

9. **You (to James): "I hope we can solve this problem quickly." *(tell)***

10. **Susan (to Carol): "Can you help me?" *(ask)***

# THANK YOU!

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