Welcome to the June 2025 Intermediate OPEN:

> REPORTED SPEECH



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 can fix the problem."

Indirect speech:

"Tanaka-san said she could fix the problem."

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	s => 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 =2	> Past perfect	I had already eaten dinner.	He said (that) he had already eaten

* 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.

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

ſ	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	l'II 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.

• '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 don't use the auxiliary verb 'do'.

Where's the meeting room?	He asked <i>me</i> where the meeting room was.
What time does the presentation start?	She asked <i>him</i> 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 <i>whether</i> I was going to the conference in Tokyo.



Change direct speech into indirect (reported) speech



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)
- 2. Jim (to Amy): "I'm going to Boise tomorrow." (tell)
- 3. Bill (to me): "Do you need any help?" (ask)
- **01.** Kenta: "I worked in Boise for 5 months." *(say)*
- 02. Ayane (to Reina): "I can play piano and violin." (tell)
- **03.** Diane: "I will give my presentation at 3 o'clock this afternoon." *(say)*
- 04. Kazuyoshi (to Akira): "What are you doing?" (ask)
- 05. Dave (to Ken): "I should have studied harder for the exam." (tell)
- 06. Ann: "I will have to go home early." (explain)
- 07. John: "I have to work every weekend." (complain)
- **08.** James: "There is a big problem with the production schedule." *(admit)*
- **09.** You (to James): "I hope we can solve this problem quickly." *(tell)*
- 10. Susan (to Carol): "Can you help me?" (ask)

Mary said (that) she had almost finished writing her presentation. Jim told Mary (that) he was going to Boise the following day. Bill asked me if I needed any help.

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- 2. Jim (to Amy): "I'm going to Boise tomorrow." (tell)
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Mary said (that) she had almost finished writing her presentation. Jim told Mary (that) he was going to Boise the following day. Bill asked me if I needed any help.

11. Taro: "I don't understand this part of the manual." (say) **12.** Mika (to her manager): "I'll send the report by Friday." (tell) **13.** Koji: "I've already booked my flight to Osaka." (say) **14.** Naomi (to Ken): "Are you free for a meeting this afternoon?" (ask) **15.** Haruki: "I forgot to attach the file to the email." (admit) **16.** Keiko (to me): "Can you explain the new safety rules?" **(ask) 17.** Hiroshi: "I'll try to finish the project by Monday." (promise) **18.** Miki (to Yuki): "I need more time to complete the task." *(tell)* **19.** Kenji: "I always arrive on time, but no one notices." *(complain)* **20.** Emi: "I think this idea could work well." (say)