Explanations

Reported speech

We often tell people what other people have said. This is called reported or indirect speech. We rarely report the exact words, usually we just give a general summary.

Sandra speaking to Petra: *'Bye, Petra, it's been great seeing you again. I'll call you sometime next week when I get a chance.'*

Petra reporting the conversation to Roberta: *'I saw Sandra yesterday. She said she'd call me next week.*

We usually change tenses (*will → would* in the example above) and also other references like people, places and times (*you → me* in the example above).

Tense changes

Statements are usually reported with a past tense verb (like *said*) and an optional *that*. The form of the verb that follows then 'moves back' in time. This is sometimes called backshift.

Present simple to past simple	*'I **need** some help.'* *She said (that) she **needed** some help.*
Present continuous to past continuous	*'We **are having** our lunch.'* *She said that they **were having** their lunch.*
Present perfect to past perfect	*'I've **lost** my keys.'* *He said (that) he **had lost** his keys.*
Past simple to past perfect (or stays the same)	*'I **wrote** two letters to her.'* *He said (that) he **had written** two letters to her.* *He said (that) he **wrote** two letters to her.*
be going to to *was going to*	*'They **are going to** come back.'* *She said (that) they **were going to** come back.*
will to *would* *can* to *could*	*'I **will be** home at 6.00.'* *She said (that) she **would be** home at 6.00.*

■ There is no change for *must, might, could, should, would.*
  *'I **must leave** straightaway for Brussels.'*
  *He said he **must leave** straightaway for Brussels.*
  But in the case of *must* we can also use *had to.*
  *He said he **had to leave** straightaway for Brussels.*

■ Note that if the actual words were in the past simple, the report can change or stay the same.

■ Note that if we write down the actual words that someone says we use speech marks (inverted commas). But if we write down a report of the words there are no speech marks.

No tense changes

- If the report is about something which is always true, it is not necessary to change tenses.

    *'I **like** apples more than I **like** oranges.'*

    *She said that she **likes** apples more than she **likes** oranges.*

  But in cases like this it is still possible to change tenses if you want to.

- If the report is about something that has immediate relevance, we usually do not change tenses.

    Jack speaking to Ted: *'**I'm going** to the cinema tonight. Do you want to come?'*

    Ted reporting the conversation to Peter: *'Jack is on the phone. He **says he's going** to the cinema tonight.'*

Speakers in reported speech

When we write down the actual words, the speaker can be mentioned at the beginning or end of the sentence. Notice the position of the comma and the final full stop in relation to the speech marks.

Jack said, 'We're going to miss the train.'

'We're going to miss the train,' said Jack.

But in reported speech the speaker is only mentioned at the beginning of the sentence.

Jack said (that) they were going to miss the train.

People, places, times

In reported speech references to people, places and times often change, because the point of view changes.

*'I'll see **you here tomorrow**,' said Sue.*

*Sue said (that) **she** would see **me there the next day**.*

*'I bought **this** book **yesterday**,' said Martin.*

*Martin said (that) **he** had bought **the** book **the day before**.*

Summarizing

We usually just summarize what people say when we make reports.

*'Look, actually, tell him **I'll** give him a call or email him next week, OK?'*

*Reported as: She said (that) **she'd** get in touch next week.*

If we report the exact words it is called verbatim reporting.

say, tell, speak

We *say* something and we *tell* somebody. *Say* and *tell* can be followed by the optional *that*.

'It's warm today,' she said.

*She **said** (that) it was warm.*

*She **told me** (that) it was warm.*

We can use *to* after say, but we never use *to* after tell.

'I come from Slovenia'

*She **said to me** (that) she comes from Slovenia.*

*She **told me** (that) she comes from Slovenia.*

Speak describes the act of talking.

*Simon **spoke** to me in the supermarket yesterday.*

Practice

1 <u>Underline</u> the errors in these sentences. Rewrite each sentence.

a) Sally <u>told</u> that she'd lost her keys.
   Sally said that she'd lost her keys.

b) Chris said me that he must leave early.
   ....

c) Maria and Tony said they shall see us tomorrow.
   ....

d) Tom said, I'm coming to your party.
   ....

e) Sue said that she had wrote a letter to Lisa.
   ....

f) Steve said us that he was arriving at 8.00.
   ....

g) 'I had bought a new bike Pam told us.'
   ....

h) 'What's the matter? Ellen told.
   ....

2 Rewrite each sentence in direct speech, ending as shown.

a) Anna told us that she'd finished.
   ' *I've finished* ,' Anna told us.

b) Simon said that he would be back at 6.00.
   '..,' Simon said.

c) Beth said she was going to go shopping.
   '..,' said Beth.

d) Paul said that he wanted to make a phone call.
   '..,' said Paul.

e) Tina told the teacher she'd forgotten her homework.
   '..,' Tina told the teacher.

f) David said he had to be back by 3.30.
   '..,' David said.

g) Jan told me she would let me know.
   '..,' Jan told me.

h) Bill said he was going to be late.
   '..,' Bill said.

3 Match each sentence in direct speech (a–e) with its summarized version in reported speech (1–5).

a) 'Look, sorry about this, but I'm afraid I'm going to be a bit late.' ....*3*....

b) 'Actually I've no idea at all where I am!' ....

c) 'The thing is, I know it's silly but I've missed the bus.' ....

d) 'Anyway, I'll be back in next to no time.' ....

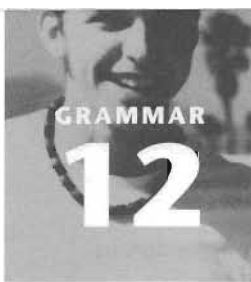e) 'I did ring, you know, earlier in the evening.' ....

1 She said she would be back soon.

2 She said she had missed the bus.

3 She said she was going to be late.

4 She said she had already rung.

5 She said she didn't know where she was.

4 Complete each sentence, using *say, tell* or *speak* in an appropriate form.

a) Daniel ...*told*..... me that he was playing in the school basketball team.

b) I .... to Helen, and she .... she would phone you.

c) 'You're lucky,' .... Steve. 'I .... you that you would win!'

d) A translator .... the President what everyone was ....

e) 'Look,' I .... her, 'why don't you .... me what you mean?'

f) I .... my teacher that I .... Chinese, but she didn't believe me.

5 Rewrite each sentence in reported speech, beginning as shown.

a) 'I won't be there because I'm having a party,' said Lucy.
Lucy told us that she ..*wouldn't be there because she was having*....
..*a party.*..

b) 'I've lost the map and I don't know the way,' said Jack.
Jack told me that he ....
....

c) 'When I finish the book, I'm going to watch television,' said Jessica.
Jessica said that when ....
....

d) 'I'm doing some homework but I won't be long,' said Mike.
Mike said that he ....
....

e) 'I got up late and I missed the bus,' said Richard.
Richard said that he ....
....

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Explanations

Reporting questions

■ We can report questions with verbs like *ask, wonder* and *want to know*. Tense change rules are the same as in Grammar 11.

> '**Where do** you **live?**' he asked.
> He **asked** me where I **lived**.   (NOT ~~where I did live~~)
> '**Do** you **live** in Athens?' he asked.
> He **wanted to know** if I **lived** in Athens.   (NOT ~~If I did live~~)

■ Look at more examples of '*Wh-* questions' (using *when, what, why, how* etc). Study the tense changes and word order carefully. Notice that the word order in a reported question is like a normal statement, with the subject before the verb.

> '*Where* **is the bus station?**' she asked.
> She asked where **the bus station was.**   (NOT ~~where was the bus station~~)
> '*What* **are you doing?**' he asked.
> He wanted to know what **I was doing**.
> '*Why* **did you go** there?' she asked.
> She wondered why **I had gone** there.
> '*Where* **have you come** from?' he asked.
> He asked me where **I had come** from.

■ Look at more examples of *Yes/No* questions (*Do you, Did you, Are you* etc.). When we report *Yes/No* questions we use *if* or *whether*.

> '**Does** the London train **stop** here?' she asked.
> She asked me if the London train **stopped** here.
> '**Did you speak** to Rachel?' he asked.
> He wanted to know **whether I had spoken** to Rachel.
> '**Are you** a student?' she asked.
> She asked me **if I was** a student.

Reporting commands and requests

■ Commands are reported with *tell* and the infinitive.
> '*Wait! Wait!*'
> I **told** him to wait.

■ Requests are reported with *ask* and the infinitive.
> '*Please wait!*'
> I **asked** her to wait.

Other reporting verbs

■ Grammar 11 used *say* as the reporting verb, but there are many others. Here are some of the most common:

advise	*'I wouldn't buy that car, Janos, if I were you.'*
	I **advised** *Janos not to buy the car.*
agree	*'OK, I'll give you a lift,' said Jenny.*
	Jenny **agreed** *to give her a lift.*
	'Yes, Jill, I think you're right,' said Mike.
	Mike **agreed** *with Jill.*
apologize for	*'I'm really sorry for being so late,' said Maria.*
	Maria **apologized for** *being late.*
ask	*'Do you think you could help me, Sue?'*
	I **asked** *Sue to help me.*
congratulate on	*'Well done, Tina, you've passed the exam!'*
	I **congratulated** *Tina* **on** *passing her exam.*
decide	*'I'll have the fish soup, please,' said Bill.*
	Bill **decided** *to have the fish soup.*
deny	*'No, I didn't take it! I wasn't even there!' said Alice.*
	Alice **denied** *taking it.*
invite	*'Would you like to come to the cinema on Saturday, Pam?'*
	I **invited** *Pam to the cinema on Saturday.*
offer	*'Shall I carry your case, Dawn?' said Peter.*
	Peter **offered** *to carry Dawn's case.*
promise	*'I'll definitely be home by eight,' said Ann.*
	Ann **promised** *to be home by eight.*
refuse	*'No, I won't open the door!' said Carol.*
	Carol **refused** *to open the door.*
remind	*'Don't forget to send your mother a birthday card, Joe.'*
	I **reminded** *Joe to send his mother a birthday card.*
suggest	*'How about spending the day at the beach?' said Carlos.*
	Carlos **suggested** *spending the day at the beach.*

■ Reporting verbs can have one or more different patterns. A good dictionary shows this information. Study the example sentences in the previous section in relation to the patterns below.

Verb + *to* infinitive:	*agree, decide, offer, promise, refuse*
Verb + object + *to* infinitive:	*advise, ask, invite, remind*
Verb + *-ing* form:	*deny, suggest*
Verb + preposition + *-ing* form:	*apologize for, congratulate on*

Practice

1 Put one suitable word in each space.

a) Fiona asked me ...*whether*... I ....*was*.......... going to school or not.

b) David asked his mother .... she .... be coming home.

c) Peter asked us .... we .... ever been to Hungary.

d) Costas asked me .... I .... many photographs.

e) Maria asked a policeman .... the museum was.

f) Dora asked her sister .... she .... fed their dog.

2 Complete each question in direct speech, ending as shown.

a) Jack asked me whether I was having lunch or going out.
'..*Are you having lunch or going out*................. ?' Jack asked me.

b) Carol asked Ann what she had done the day before.
'.. , Ann?' asked Carol.

c) John asked us if we often went sailing.
'.. ?' John asked us.

d) Christine asked me how many German books I had read.
'.. ?' Christine asked me.

e) Kevin asked Sue if she was going to change schools.
'.. , Sue?' asked Kevin.

f) Alice asked me who I sat next to in class.
'.. ?' Alice asked me.

3 Rewrite each sentence in reported speech, beginning as shown. Do not change the meaning.

a) 'Are you staying here all summer?' the little girl asked me.
The little girl asked me *if/whether I was staying there all summer.*

b) 'What does 'procrastinate' mean?' I asked my teacher.
I asked my teacher ....

c) 'Have you done your homework, or not?' my mother asked me.
My mother asked me ....

d) 'When is your birthday?' I asked Sue.
I asked Sue ....

e) 'Did you remember to lock the door,' my father asked me.
My father asked me ....

f) 'Why have you turned off the television?' Ellen asked me.
Ellen asked me ....

4 **Use a verb from the box to rewrite each sentence in reported speech, beginning as shown. Do not change the meaning.**

advised	apologized	congratulated	invited	offered
~~promised~~	refused	suggested		

a) 'I'll definitely be at your house before 8.00, Sue,' said Mike.

Mike ..*promised*.. Sue ..*he would be at her house before 8.00*..........

b) 'Would you like to come to the cinema, Jean?' asked Chris.

Chris ....

c) 'I wouldn't eat too much if I were you, Dave,' said Patsy.

Patsy ....

d) 'How about going for a walk?' said Nick.

Nick ....

e) 'I'm terribly sorry for breaking the window,' said Carol.

Carol ....

f) 'Shall I do the washing-up?' said Bill.

Bill ....

g) 'Well done, you've passed your driving test,' said Tina's mother.

Tina's mother .... her ....

h) 'No, I won't open my mouth!' said Pat.

Pat ....