

How to use reported speech in English?

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In English, you use many gigantic words to make a sentence impressive. But may fail to give attention to grammar that you use while talking to someone. However, grammar Nazis have noticed that many people make a mistake in their sentence and realize it only after they have been informed. Sometimes the whole sentence goes wrong and you fail to recognize until the person listening to it, corrects it. Generally, these types of issues in English happen when you report a speech to the person whom it has to be addressed.



A reported speech is when the first person tells the third person what the second person has said. In simple words, it is when you tell somebody what you or the another person was saying. The main motto of a reported speech is to deliver a sentence in a different way and get an idea of how to distinguish direct speech from the reported speech.

While you deliver a reported speech, you use the words 'say' or 'tell'. These words can be said as 'reporting verbs'. You must always remember that you must never change the tenses when you are reporting. Whatever tense is used by the second person while talking to you, same tense must be followed while informing to the third person. If it is in past tense, then use past tense or the one used.

Direct speech- I love bikes.

Reported speech- He said he loves bikes.

Direct speech- You look beautiful.

Reported speech- I told her she looks beautiful.

But a case might come where you need to change the tense in the reported speech, if the reported verb is a past tense.

Direct speech- Kim caught a butterfly.

Reported speech- I said Kim had caught a butterfly.

Sit down!



She told me to sit down

Reported speech are used when we report a statement or a question.

Reporting a statement:

While you report a statement, you need to take care of the usage of pronoun and tenses. In case of a pronoun, you need to check who is delivering the speech and what is that person telling. Like,

Direct speech- They said, "His height is short."

Report speech- They said his height is short.

In case of a tense, if there is a present tense there is a no backshift of tense in the reported speech. Whereas for a past tense, there is a backshift of tense. Relate it with the examples below,

Direct speech- He said, "I went to Manali."

Report speech- He said he had gone to Manali.

There might be a chance where you might change the report statement according to the place and time expressions. For example,

- a) Today- that day
- b) Tomorrow-the next day
- c) Now- then

Reporting questions:

Just like the case for reporting statements, you need to keep a track of using the tenses, pronouns and place. While reporting a question, you use an indirect question and not a direct one, which anyway would not be called as a reported question.

Direct speech- "Why don't you speak English?"

Report speech- He asked me why I didn't speak English.

Direct speech- "Weren't you supposed to be there at the party?"

Report speech- She asked me why I didn't attend the party.

With the above examples, you must have understood what a reported speech is and how is it used in a

sentence. It is always good to practice what you learn. So keep practicing and [improve your English](#) communication skills with the help of an online English tutor.

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-By Chander Madan

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