

Unit 12: REPORTED SPEECH

REPORTED STATEMENTS

When do we use reported speech? Sometimes someone says a sentence, for example „*I'm going to the cinema tonight*". Later, maybe we want to tell someone else what the first person said.

If we report what another person has said, we usually do not use the speaker's exact words (direct speech), but reported (indirect) speech. Therefore, you need to learn how to transform direct speech into reported speech. The structure is a little different depending on whether you want to transform a **statement**, **question** or **request**.

HOW TO FORM REPORTED STATEMENTS?

We use a **reporting verb** like *say* or *tell*. If this verb is in the present tense, then we don't need to change the tense (be careful with *Present Simple* -(e)s ending), though we probably do need to change the **pronouns**, for example from *I* to *she*. We also may need to change words like *my* and *your* and **place and time expressions**.

Direct speech: I like ice cream.

Reported speech: She says (that) she likes ice cream.

But, if the reporting verb is in the past tense, then usually we change the tenses in the reported speech.

Direct speech: I like ice cream.

Reported speech: She said (that) she liked ice cream.

Occasionally, we don't need to change the present tense into the past if the information in direct speech is still true (but this is only for things which are general facts, and even then usually we like to change the tense):

Direct speech: The sky is blue.

Reported speech: She said (that) the sky is/was blue.

REPORTED QUESTIONS

Making reported questions is not so different from reported statements. The tense changes are the same, and we keep the question word. The very important thing though is that, once we tell the question to someone else, it isn't a question any more. So we need to change the grammar to a normal positive sentence.

INFORMATION QUESTIONS

Direct speech: Where do you live?

Reported speech: She asked me where I lived.

Direct speech: Where is Julie?

Reported speech: She asked me where Julie was.

The direct question is the present simple of *be*. We make the question form of the present simple of *be* by inverting (changing the position of) the subject and verb. So, we need to change them back before putting the verb into the past simple.

YES / NO QUESTIONS

In yes/no questions we don't have any question words to help us. Instead, we use *if*:

Direct speech: Do you like chocolate?

Reported speech: She asked me if I liked chocolate.

REPORTED REQUESTS / COMMANDS

We usually introduce reported commands with the verb *tell*. The structure is very simple:

tell + noun / pronoun + to infinitive

- We told the man not to smoke.
- The policeman told us to follow him.

Because we use the infinitive there is no need to worry about tense, but as with reported statements and questions, we may need to change pronouns as well as time and place in reported requests / commands.

Direct speech: She said, „Eat your food now!“

Reported speech: She told the boy to eat his food right then.

Direct speech: The policeman said: „Get out of your car!“

Reported speech: The policeman instructed us to get out of our car.

Direct speech: She said, „You must make the bed before you go to work!“

Reported speech: She told her husband to make the bed before he went to work.

Direct speech: The doctor said: „Don't smoke in here!“

Reported speech: The doctor told them not to smoke in there.

EXERCISES:

- [statements](#)
- [questions](#)
- [commands](#)

TENSE BACKSHIFT

DIRECT SPEECH	REPORTED SPEECH
Present Simple	Past Simple
Present Continuous	Past Continuous
Present Perfect Past Simple Past Perfect	Past Perfect
Present Perfect Continuous Past Continuous Past Perfect Continuous	Past Perfect Continuous
Future Simple (will)	Conditional I. (would)
Future tense (going to)	was / were going to

OTHER EXPRESSIONS

DIRECT SPEECH	REPORTED SPEECH
today	that day
now	then
yesterday	the day before
last week	the week before
next year	the following year
tomorrow	the next day
here	there
this	that
these	those