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# REPORTED SPEECH

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## ***DIRECT AND INDIRECT (OR REPORTED) SPEECH.***

### ***INTRODUCTION***

There are two ways of relating what a person has said: direct and indirect.  
In direct speech we repeat the original speaker's exact words:

*He said, "I have lost my umbrella."*

Remarks thus repeated are placed between inverted commas, and a comma is placed immediately before the remark. Direct speech is found in conversations in books, in plays and in quotations.

In indirect speech we give the exact meaning of a remark or a speech, without necessarily using the speaker's exact words:

*He said (that) he had lost his umbrella.*

There is no comma after **say** in indirect speech. **that** can usually be omitted after **say** and **tell** + object. But it should be kept after other verbs: **complain, explain, object, point out, protest** etc. Indirect speech is normally used when conversation is reported verbally, though direct speech is sometimes here to give a more dramatic effect.

When we turn direct speech into indirect, some changes are usually necessary.

### ***PRONOUNS AND ADJECTIVES: CHANGES NECESSARY***

A. First and second person pronouns and possessive adjectives normally change to the third person except when the speaker is reporting his own words. (I = he, she; me = him, her; my = his, her; mine = his, hers; we = they...)

*She said, "he's my son". → She said that he was her son.*

*"I'm ill", she said. → She said that she was ill.*

### ***B. THIS / THESE***

**This** used in time expressions usually becomes **that**.

*She said, "She's coming this week". □ She said that she was coming that week.*

**This** and **that** used as adjectives usually change to **the**.

*He said, "I bought this pearl/these pearls for my mother". □*

*He said that he had bought the pearl/the pearls for his mother.*

**This, these** used as pronouns can become **it, they/them**.

*He came back with two knives and said, "I found these beside the king's bed". □ He said he had found them beside the king's bed.*

*He said, "We will discuss this tomorrow". □ He said that they would discuss it (the matter) the next day.*

## ***EXPRESSIONS OF TIME AND PLACE IN INDIRECT SPEECH***

A. Adverbs and adverbial phrases of time change as follows:

<b>DIRECT SPEECH</b>	<b>INDIRECT SPEECH</b>
<i>today</i>	<i>that day</i>
<i>yesterday</i>	<i>the day before</i>
<i>the day before yesterday</i>	<i>two days before</i>
<i>tomorrow</i>	<i>the next day/the following day</i>
<i>the day after tomorrow</i>	<i>in two day's time</i>
<i>next week/year etc.</i>	<i>the following week/year etc.</i>
<i>last week/year etc.</i>	<i>the previous week/year etc.</i>
<i>a year etc. ago</i>	<i>a year before/the previous year</i>

*"I saw her the day before yesterday", he said. □ He said he'd seen her two days before.*  
*"I'll do it tomorrow", he promised. □ He promised that he would do it the next day.*  
*She said, "My father died a year ago". □ She said that her father had died a year before/the previous year.*

B. But if the speech is made and reported on the same day these time changes are not necessary:

*At breakfast this morning he said, "I'll be very busy today". → At breakfast this morning he said that he would be very busy today.*

C. **here** can become **there** but only when it is clear what place is meant:

*At the station he said, "I'll be here again tomorrow". → He said that he'd be there again the next day.*

Usually **here** has to be replaced by some phrase:

*She said, "You can sit here, Tom". → She told Tom that he could sit beside her.*

### **STATEMENTS IN INDIRECT SPEECH: TENSE CHANGES NECESSARY**

A. Indirect speech can be introduced by a verb in a present tense: *He says that ...* This is usual when we are:

- reporting a conversation that is still going on
- reading a letter and reporting what it says
- reading instructions and reporting them
- reporting a statement that someone makes very often, e.g. *Tom says that he'll never get married.*

When the introductory verb is in a present, present perfect or future tense we can report the direct speech without any change of tense:

PAUL (phoning from the station): *I'm trying to get a taxi.*

ANN (to Mary, who is standing beside her): *Paul says he is trying to get a taxi.*

B. But indirect speech is usually introduced by a verb in the past tense. Verbs in the direct speech have then to be changed into a corresponding past tense. The changes are shown in the following table.

DIRECT SPEECH	INDIRECT SPEECH
<b>Simple Present</b> <i>"I never eat meat", he explained.</i>	<b>Simple Past</b> <i>= He explained (that) he never ate meat.</i>
<b>Present Continuous</b> <i>"I'm waiting for Ann", he said.</i>	<b>Past Continuous</b> <i>= He said (that) he was waiting for Ann.</i>
<b>Present Perfect</b> <i>"I have found a flat", he said.</i>	<b>Past Perfect</b> <i>= He said (that) he had found a flat.</i>
<b>Present Perfect Continuous</b> <i>He said, "I've been waiting for ages".</i>	<b>Past Perfect Continuous</b> <i>= He said (that) he had been waiting for ages.</i>
<b>Simple Past</b> <i>"I took it home with me", she said.</i>	<b>Past Perfect</b> <i>= She said (that) he had taken it home with her.</i>
<b>Future</b> <i>He said, "I will/shall be in Paris on Monday".</i>	<b>Conditional</b> <i>= He said (that) he would be in Paris on Monday.</i>
<b>Future Continuous</b> <i>"I will/shall be using the car myself on the 24h", she said.</i>	<b>Conditional Continuous</b> <i>= She said (that) she'd been using the car herself on the 24th.</i>
<b>Conditional</b> <i>I said, "I would like to see it".</i>	<b>Conditional</b> <i>= I said (that) I would like to see it.</i>

All those changes represent the distancing effect of the reported speech. Common sense, together with the time aspect from the speaker's point of view, are more important than the rules when making the usual changes.