

Reported Speech

When a person talks, the words they say are called **direct speech**. The person speaking is giving some information, giving a command, or asking a question. If another person wants to tell somebody else what the original person said or asked, then they use **reported speech**. **Reported speech** is telling another person what someone else said. For example, there are three friends at a restaurant; Bob, Susan, and Kathy. Bob uses **direct speech** and says, “**I love this restaurant.**” Susan does not hear what Bob said so she asks Kathy to tell her what Bob said. Kathy uses **reported speech** to tell Susan what Bob said by saying, “**He says that he loves this restaurant.**”

Reported speech always uses a **report verb** such as “**say,**” “**tell,**” or “**ask.**” When the **report verb** is used in the **simple present tense** (“**say,**” “**tell,**” “**ask.**”), then the **reported speech** should be in the **simple present tense**. If the **report verb** is in the **simple past tense** (“**said,**” “**told,**” “**asked**”), then the **reported speech** must follow a special **verb tense** rule.

Direct Speech to Reported Speech Present Tense Report Verb

When using **reported speech** with a **present tense report verb**, the **tense** of the **verb** in the **reported speech** does **not** change. For example, the **direct speech verb** is **simple present tense** and the **report verb** is **present tense** so the **reported speech verb** stays as **simple present tense**. Additionally, if a **modal verb** is used in **direct speech**, then it must also be used in the **reported speech**. Remember that **modal verbs** do not have a **tense** but they are used in **reported speech** to help show the **tense** or make the speech more formal.

Direct Speech (present tense)	Report Verb	Reported Speech (present tense)
I love this restaurant.	say	He says he loves this restaurant.
I am swimming.	tell	Susan tells me that she is swimming.
Are those cats or dogs?	ask	They ask if those are cats or dogs.
I can eat pizza.	say	She says she can eat pizza.
I may eat pizza.	tell	She tells me she may eat pizza.

When using the **present tense** for **reported speech**, it is more common to use the **report verb** “**say**” than it is to use “**tell**” or “**ask,**” but all three are OK to use.

Direct Speech to Reported Speech Past Tense Report Verb

When using **reported speech** with a **past tense report verb**, the **tense** of the **verb** in the **reported speech** changes depending on what **verb tense** is used in the **direct speech**. For example, if the **direct speech verb** is **simple present tense**, then the **reported speech verb** is changed to **simple past tense**. Additionally, many of the **modal verbs** are changed to help show that the speech is actually **reported speech**. Remember that **modal verbs** do not have a **tense** but they are used in **reported speech** to help show the **tense** or make the speech more formal.

Direct Speech (present tense)	Past Tense Report Verb	Reported Speech (past tense)
I love pizza.	said	She said she loved pizza.
I want some ice cream.	told	He told me that he wanted some ice cream.
Is that a good movie?	asked	They asked if that was a good movie.
I can eat pizza.	said	She said she could eat pizza.
I may eat pizza.	told	She told us she might eat pizza.

The chart below shows how each **direct speech verb tense** changes when used with a **past tense report verb**. Be careful because sometimes the **reported speech verb tense** does **not** change.

<i>Direct Speech Tense</i>	<i>Reported Speech Tense</i>	<i>Example</i>
SIMPLE PRESENT "I need a vacation."	SIMPLE PRESENT	She says she needs a vacation.
SIMPLE PRESENT "I need a vacation."	SIMPLE PAST	She said she needed a vacation.
PRESENT CONTINUOUS "We are cooking dinner."	PAST CONTINUOUS	They told me they were cooking dinner.
PRESENT PERFECT "Yuuki has taken the test."	PAST PERFECT	He said that Yuuki had taken the test.
PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS "This movie has been exciting ."	PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS	He told us the movie had been exciting .
SIMPLE PAST "Who ate the pizza?"	PAST PERFECT	She asked who had eaten the pizza.
PAST CONTINUOUS "The car was stopping every hour."	PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS	They said that the car had been stopping every hour.
PAST PERFECT "They had come home."	PAST PERFECT (NO CHANGE)	Yuuki told us they had come home.
PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS "We had been eating earlier."	PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS (NO CHANGE)	Somebody told us they had been eating earlier.
WILL "I will sleep now."	WILL (CASUAL) WOULD (FORMAL)	Joe said he will sleep now. Joe said he would sleep now.
CAN " Can you pass the test?"	CAN (CASUAL) COULD (FORMAL)	I asked if you can pass the test. I asked if you could pass the test.
MUST "You must buy me a coke."	MUST (CASUAL) HAD TO (FORMAL)	He said you must buy him a coke. He said that you had to buy him a coke.
MAY "I may come home."	MAY (CASUAL) MIGHT (FORMAL)	Arnold told me he may come home. Arnold told me he might come home.
OUGHT TO "You ought to go to school."	OUGHT TO (NO CHANGE)	My mom said I ought to go to school.
SHOULD "We should eat this cake now."	SHOULD (NO CHANGE)	The kids said they should eat this cake now.
WOULD "I would do it if I could."	WOULD (NO CHANGE)	Suga told us he would do it if he could.
COULD " Could you do it now, please?"	COULD (NO CHANGE)	Everybody asked her if she could do it now.
MIGHT "The plane might be on time."	MIGHT (NO CHANGE)	The airline said that the plane might be on time.

Let's Practice

Use the **report verb** and the **direct speech tense** shown in each practice problem to create a **reported speech** sentence. Remember to follow the rules for the **report verb**, **verb tense** change, and **modal verb**.

Using the report verb and direct speech verb tense shown, make a reported speech sentence.

Report Verb: *Say*

Direct Speech Tense: *Simple Present*

He says he loves spicy meatballs.

Using the report verb and direct speech verb tense shown, make a reported speech sentence.

Report Verb: *Said*

Direct Speech Tense: *Present Perfect*

Using the report verb and direct speech verb tense shown, make a reported speech sentence.

Report Verb: *Told*

Direct Speech Tense: *Simple Present*

Using the report verb and direct speech verb tense shown, make a reported speech sentence.

Report Verb: *Asked*

Direct Speech Tense: *Past Perfect Continuous*

Using the report verb and direct speech verb tense shown, make a reported speech sentence.

Report Verb: *Said*

Direct Speech Tense: *Modal Verb*

You Try

See if you can make your own *reported speech* sentences using one of the *report verbs* “say,” “tell,” “ask,” “said,” “told,” “asked” and following the *verb tense change* chart above. Try to use different *verb tenses*, *modal verbs*, and casual or formal speech.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____
