

Handout

Reported Speech 1 of 3

Rules for changing Direct Speech to Indirect Speech

There are certain rules which need to be followed while changing from direct to indirect speech or vice versa:

Rule 1: Change present tense to past tense following the past form of the reporting verb. This is called *Backshift changes*

DIRECT SPEECH

INDIRECT SPEECH

Simple Present Tense:

He said, "I feel great."

Simple Past Tense:

He said that he felt great.

Present Perfect Tense:

The teacher said, "I have written the example on the board."

Past Perfect Tense:

The teacher said that she had written the example on the board."

Present Continuous Tense:

Rahul said, "I am going to the gym."

Past Continuous Tense:

Rahul said that he was going to the gym.

Present Perfect Continuous Tense:

She said, "I have been living here for five years."

Past Perfect Continuous Tense:

She said that she had been living there for five years.

Simple Past Tense:

My mother said to me, "You watched YouTube all night."

Past Perfect Tense:

My mom said that I had watched YouTube all night.

Exception: When the direct speech consists of a universal fact or truth, then the tense of the sentence remains the same.

Example:

- *Direct:* The teacher said, "World Environment Day is celebrated on 5th June."
Indirect: The teacher said that World Environment Day is celebrated on 5th June

Rule 2: *For change in adverbs, pronouns, demonstratives, and auxiliary verbs*

DIRECT SPEECH

INDIRECT SPEECH

Modal Verbs

must

had to/must

will

would

can

could

shall

would/could (depending on the context)

may/might

could / might

do/does

did

did

had done

Demonstratives, Pronouns and Adverbs

now

then

here

there

thus

so/hence

ago

before

this

that

these

those

DIRECT SPEECH

INDIRECT SPEECH

today	that day
tonight	that night
yesterday	the day before
tomorrow	the next day
last week	the previous week
next week	the following week

Rule 3: For Interrogative Sentences

Questions may be of two types: Questions whose answer can be given in yes or no which starts with an auxiliary verb (can, will, shall, may, could and others)

On the other hand, questions whose answers can be given in detail refers to the questions that begin with wh-word, i.e. when, how, who, what, which, where, why and so forth. Here, the reporting verb is changed from said to ask in the reporting speech.

- **When the answer can be given in yes or no** – Do not use the word ‘that’ in the reporting speech, remove question mark and quotation mark and use ‘if’ or ‘whether’.

Example:

- *Direct:* She said, “Are you going to the party?”
Indirect: She asked if I am going to the party.

- **When questions are reported inversion of the verb with the noun or the pronoun takes place:**

Example:

- *Direct:* Samrat said, “Where are my keys?”
Indirect: Samrat wondered where his keys were.

} inversion of the verb and the pronoun

- *Direct:* Dennis said, “Mom, can I make a sandwich?”
 - *Indirect:* Dennis asked his mother if he could make a sandwich.
- } inversion of the verb and the pronoun

Rule 4: *When the direct speech contains orders, request, advise, suggestions command etc. then the reporting verb is changed to tell, request, command, instruct, order, advise, suggestion etc.*

Example:

- *Direct:* “Don’t make noise”, said the librarian.
- *Indirect:* The librarian told me not to make noise.

Rule 5: *When something is said repeatedly by a person, or it is said by many people we use says/say instead of said in the direct speech. Says when it is said by only one person and say when it is said by many people. Further, in indirect speech, it is replaced by tell/tells accordingly.*

Example:

- *Direct:* My father says to me, “You are very naughty.”
- *Indirect:* My father says to me that I am very naughty.

The reporting verb remains in simple present tense also when the actual words are still true when it is reported.

Rule 6: *When there is an exclamatory sentence in the direct speech, first, the exclamatory sentence is changed into an assertive sentence. The inverted commas, interjections like oh, hurray, bravo etc. and the exclamatory mark is removed. The reporting verb, i.e. said is changed into exclaimed, and we use the conjunction that to add the clause.*

Example:

- *Direct:* “Oh wow! it’s beautiful” she said.
- *Indirect:* She exclaimed that it was very beautiful.
