

What Are Direct Speech and Reported Speech?

Direct speech is exactly what a person says. When we want to quote someone's exact words, we use quotation marks.

For example:

- "The novel is really interesting," said Andrea.
When we want to report what someone said, we do not use quotation marks. We report what they said, but we don't use their exact words. This is called **reported speech** or **indirect speech**.

For example:

- Andrea said the novel was really interesting.

Changes in Person, Place, Time, and Possessive Words

When we use indirect speech, we are reporting what someone else said in a different time and situation. Logically, we need to change some of the words from the original statement.

This happens with person, place, time, and possessive words.

For example:

- DIRECT SPEECH: "**You** are a very good employee."
REPORTED SPEECH: He said **I** was a very good employee.
(We need to change the **person** word.)
- DIRECT SPEECH: "It is sunny **here**."
REPORTED SPEECH: She said it was sunny **there**.
(We need to change the **place** word.)
- DIRECT SPEECH: "I went to a concert **yesterday**."
REPORTED SPEECH: She said she went to a concert **the day before**.
(We need to change the **time** word.)
- DIRECT SPEECH: "Harvey is **our** pet dog."
REPORTED SPEECH: She said Harvey is **their** pet dog.
(We need to change the **possessive** word.)

Reporting Verbs

There are some verbs that we use very often when we report what other people said.

Some of the most common ones are:

- say
- tell
- warn
- promise
- announce
- mention

For example:

- They **said** it rained all evening.
- She **promised** she would call me today.
- They **announced** that the President would make a speech.
- Greg **mentioned** that he was sick.



Remember that when we use the reporting verbs **tell** and **warn**, we always need to say **who**.

For example:

- Emily **told me** she had finished her project.
- The lifeguard **warned the swimmers** there could be sharks.



It is important to remember that the word **that** in reported speech is **almost always optional**.

For example:

- They said there was a meeting at four o'clock.
OR
They said **that** there was a meeting at four o'clock.

Tense Shift

When we report what someone else has said, we are giving the information **at a later time**. They said something earlier, and we are reporting it now.

Because we are giving the information at a later time, we need to change the tense in the original statement so that it makes sense. We "**back-step**" with the verb tense.

For example, if the statement was made in the simple present, we report it in the simple past:

- "I **am** really tired," she said.
- She said she **was** really tired.

If the statement was made in the simple past, we use the past perfect when we report:

- "They **came** to the house around 4:30pm," he told me.
- He told me they **had come** to the house around 4:30pm.

If the statement was made in the present perfect, we use the past perfect when we report:

- "We **have eaten** breakfast already," Brian said.
- Brian said they **had eaten** breakfast already.

