

Book: Passages 1

Level: 10th

Unit: 5

Objective: Reporting what someone else has said.

Reported Speech

Definition

Reported speech is often also called indirect speech. It consists in telling somebody else what you or another person said before. The verbs therefore usually have to be in the past. For example:

"I'm going to the cinema". → *He said he was going to the cinema.*

When reporting speech, a few changes occur:

First	Choose an appropriate reporting verb - depending on the type of discourse (say, tell, ask...).
Then	Change the tenses to their past form, unless what is said is still true* .
Don't forget to	Change personal pronouns, possessive adjectives or pronouns - depending on the speaker(s).
And to	Change time and place adverbs.
Remember to	Change the punctuation - depending on the type of discourse.

Basic Tense Chart

The tenses generally move backwards in this way (the tense on the left changes to the tense on the right):

present simple I'm a teacher.	past simple He said he was a teacher
present continuous I'm having lunch with my parents.	past continuous He said he was having lunch with his parents.
present perfect simple I've been to France three times.	past perfect simple He said he had been to France three times.
present perfect continuous I've been working very hard.	past perfect continuous He said he had been working very hard.
past simple I bought a new car.	past perfect He said he had bought a new car.

past continuous It was raining earlier.	past perfect continuous He said it had been raining earlier.
past perfect The play had started when I arrived.	past perfect NO CHANGE POSSIBLE
past perfect continuous I'd already been living in London for five years.	past perfect continuous NO CHANGE POSSIBLE

Other Verb Forms

Things are slightly more complicated with imperatives:

positive imperative Shut up!	tell + infinitive He told me to shut up.
negative imperative Don't do that again!	tell + not + infinitive He told me not to do it again.
imperatives as requests Please give me some money.	ask + infinitive He asked me to give him some money.

Other verb forms also sometimes change:

will I'll come and see you soon.	would He said he would come and see me soon.
can I can swim under water for two minutes.	could He said he could swim under water for two minutes.
must All tickets must be bought in advance.	had to He said that all tickets had to be bought in advance.
shall What shall we do about it?	should He asked what we should do about it.
may May I smoke?	might He asked if he might smoke.

Exception*

The verb tenses do not always follow the rules shown above. For example, a sentence in direct speech in a present or future tense can remain the same if what is said is still true or relevant. For example:

A friend says to you:

Maria's ill. She's got chickenpox!

You say to someone else:

Laura said that Maria's ill. She's got chickenpox.

However, the following day you see Maria at the beach. You're surprised and say to her:

Laura said that you were ill. She said you had chickenpox.

This has to change to the past because it isn't true. Maria obviously isn't ill.

Time and place references

Time and place references often have to change:

now	then	yesterday	the previous day the day before
today	that day	last week	the previous week the week before
here	there	ago	previously before
this	that	2 weeks ago	2 weeks before
this week	that week	tonight	that night
tomorrow	the following day the next day the day after	last Sunday	the previous Sunday the Sunday before
next week	the following week the next week the week after	next Sunday	the following Sunday the next Sunday

Examples:

"I went to the theatre last night".

He said he had gone to the theatre the night before.

"I'm having a party next weekend".

He said he was having a party the next weekend.

"I'm staying here until next week".

He said he was staying there until the following week.

"I came over from London 3 years ago".

He said he had come over from London 3 years before.

