

Reported speech

Reported speech, also known as indirect speech, is used to convey someone else's words or thoughts without quoting them directly. Here are the rules for using reported speech in English:

Changes in pronouns and verb tenses:

- Pronouns usually change according to the perspective of the speaker. For instance, "I" becomes "he" or "she," "we" becomes "they," etc.
- Verb tenses may change, typically shifting back one tense in reported speech. For example, present simple becomes past simple, present continuous becomes past continuous, etc.

Reporting verbs:

- Reporting verbs such as "say," "tell," "ask," "explain," etc., are often used to introduce reported speech.

Time designations:

- Time designations such as *yesterday*, *tomorrow*, etc. are changed to a neutral format unless they still apply from the reporter's perspective.

Direct speech:

I am having dinner with my boss tomorrow.

tomorrow →
the next day

I → she am → was

my → her

Reported speech:

*She said that **she was** having dinner with **her** boss **the next day**.*

*She said that **she was** having dinner with **her** boss **tomorrow**.*

tomorrow = reported on the same day

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Reported speech

Speech reported in the present tense:

- If the reporting verb is in the present tense, the tense in the reported speech remains unchanged.

*She **says** that she **is** having dinner with her boss **tomorrow**.*

Reported questions:

- Questions are usually reported using the reporting verb "ask," "wonder," or similar verbs followed by "if" or "whether" (for yes/no questions) or by using the question word (interrogative pronoun).
- In reported yes/no-questions the word order changes to the normal subject-predicate-object order.

Can we have dinner together?

Question:

Reported question:

*She asked **whether/if we** could have dinner together.*

Question:

Reported question:

Where is the train station?

*She asked **where** the train station was.*

Commands/requests:

- Commands and requests are reported using verbs like "ask," "tell," etc., followed by an object and the infinitive form of the verb.

Command/request:

Take a seat, please!

Reported command:

*She **told/asked** him **to take** a seat.*

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Exercises

Put into reported speech:

1. She said, "I like chocolate". (She said...)
*She said that **she liked** chocolate.*
2. Tom works as a teacher. (He told me...)
*He told me that Tom **worked** as a teacher.*
3. We have been friends for years. (She mentioned...)
*She mentioned that **they had been** friends for years*
4. Did you finish your homework yesterday? (She asked me...)
*She asked me if **I had finished** my homework the day **before**.*
5. Where is the nearest ATM? (He wanted to know...)
*He wanted to know where the nearest ATM **was**.*
6. I will do my homework tomorrow. (She said...)
*She said that **she would** do **her** homework **the next day**.*
7. Don't forget to call me tomorrow. (He reminded me...)
*He reminded me **not to forget** to call him **the next day**.*
8. Can you lend me your pen? (He asked me...)
*He asked me if/whether **I could** lend **him** my pen.*

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Modal verbs

can, could, should,
would, must, may, might

Modal verbs express possibility, ability, permission, obligation, recommendation or wishes. They can also be used for speculating.

Modal verbs -

- do not have an infinitive with *to*
- can only form a sentence if followed by another verb in the base form (infinitive without *to*)

I can speak Spanish.

- do not change their form (there is no *s* in the third person singular)
- form questions and negations without the auxiliary verb *to do*

Can you swim? - I can't swim.

- cannot be used in all tenses and cannot be combined with other modal verbs; because of this, alternative modal expressions exist

The negative form of
must - **mustn't** - means
not to be allowed to
(not **don't have to**)

You are **not obliged** to read my email.

*I sent you an email, but you **don't have to** read it.*

*You can ask me any question, but you **must not** read my emails.*

You are **not allowed** to read my email.

- are used like auxiliaries in question tags

*He cannot speak French, **can** he?*

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Exercises

Fill in the blanks with the best suitable/correct modal verb/auxiliary:

1. They ... arrive on time if they leave now.

*They **might** (can/could) arrive on time if they leave now.*

2. Now that he hasn't arrived, we ... start the meeting without him, ...we?

*Now that he hasn't arrived, we **must** start the meeting without him, **don't** we?.*

3. You look tired. You ... take a break.

*You look tired. You **should** (ought to) take a break.*

Rewrite the sentences using modal verbs:

4. You have to wear a seatbelt in the car.

*You **must** wear a seatbelt in the car.*

5. Students are allowed to use cell phones during the exam.

*Students **may** (can) use cell phones during the exam.*

6. It is possible that she forgot about the appointment

*She **might have forgotten** about the appointment.*

7. I am capable of handling difficult situations.

*I **can** handle difficult situations.*

8. You are not supposed to smoke during the meeting.

*You **must not** smoke during the meeting.*