

DIRECT AND INDIRECT SPEECH

In conversation and writing, dialogue may be either direct or indirect. Direct speech comes from the source, whether spoken aloud or written as a quotation. Indirect speech, also known as [reported speech](#), is a second-hand account of something a person said.

Using the Past Tense

Unlike direct speech, which occurs in the present tense, indirect speech usually occurs in the [past tense](#). For example, the verbs ["say" and "tell"](#) are used to relate a conversation that you have had with someone. In this case, the verb that you are relating moves one step back into the past.

- **Tom:** *I'm working hard these days.*
- **You:** *(relating this statement to a friend): Tom **said** he was working hard lately.*
- **Annie:** *We bought some truffles for a fancy dinner.*
- **You:** *(relating this statement to a friend): Annie **told** me they had bought some truffles for a fancy dinner.*

Using the Present Tense

Indirect speech sometimes can be used in the [present tense](#) to report to someone who has not heard the original statement. When using "say" in the present tense, keep the tense the same as the original statement, but make sure to change the appropriate [pronouns](#) and helping verbs. For example:

- **Direct speech:** *I am giving my opinion.*
- **Reported speech:** *He **says** he is giving his opinion.*
- **Direct speech:** *I moved back to my parents' house two years ago.*
- **Reported speech:** *Anna **says** she moved back to her parents' house two years ago.*

Pronouns and Time Expressions

When changing from direct speech to reported speech, it is often necessary to change the pronouns to match the subject of the sentence.

- **Direct speech:** *I'm going to visit Tom tomorrow.*
- **Reported speech:** *Ken **told me** he was going to visit Tom the next day.*

It is also important to change time expressions when referring to present, past, or future time to match the moment of speaking.

- **Direct speech:** *We are working on our end of the year report right now.*
- **Reported speech:** *She **said** they were working on their end of the year report at that moment.*

Questions

When reporting questions, it is especially important to pay attention to sentence order. In these examples, note how the response repeats the question. Simple past, [present perfect](#), and past perfect all change to past perfect in the reported form.

- **Direct speech:** *Do you want to come with me?*
- **Reported speech:** *She **asked** me **if** I wanted to come with her.*
- **Direct speech:** *Where did you go last weekend?*
- **Reported speech:** *Dave **asked** me **where** I had gone the previous weekend.*
- **Direct speech:** *Why are you studying English?*
- **Reported speech:** *She **asked** me **why** I was studying English.*

Verb Changes

Although the past tense is most often used in indirect speech, you can also use other [verb tenses](#). Here is a chart of the most common verb changes for reported speech.

Present simple to **past simple** tense:

- **Direct speech:** *I work hard.*
- **Reported speech:** *He said he worked hard.*

Present continuous to **past continuous** tense:

- **Direct speech:** *She is playing the piano.*
- **Reported speech:** *He said she was playing the piano.*

Future tense (using "will"):

- **Direct speech:** *Tom **will** have a good time.*
- **Reported speech:** *He said Tom **would** have a good time.*

Future tense (using "going"):

- **Direct speech:** *Anna **is going to** attend the conference.*
- **Reported speech:** *Peter said Anna **was going to** attend the conference.*

Present perfect to **past perfect** tense:

- **Direct speech:** *I have visited Rome three times.*
- **Reported speech:** *He said he had visited Rome three times.*

Past simple to **past perfect** tense:

- **Direct speech:** *Frank bought a new car.*
- **Reported speech:** *She said Frank had bought a new car.*

Worksheet

Put the verb in brackets into the correct tense by moving the reported verb one step back into the past when necessary.

1. I'm working in Dallas today. / He said he _____ (work) in Dallas that day.
2. I think he will win the election. / She said she _____ (think) he _____ (win) the election.
3. Anna lives in London. / Peter says Anna _____ (live) in London.
4. My father is going to visit us next week. / Frank said his father _____ (visit) them the following week.
5. They bought a brand new Mercedes! / She said they _____ (buy) a brand new Mercedes.
6. I have worked at the company since 1997. / She said she _____ (work) at the company since 1997.
7. They are watching TV at the moment. / She said they _____ (watch) TV at that moment.
8. Francis drives to work every day. / He said Francis _____ (drive) to work every day.
9. Alan thought about changing his job last year. / Alan said that he _____ (thought) about changing his job the previous year.
10. Susan is flying to Chicago tomorrow. / Susan said she _____ (fly) to Chicago the next day.
11. George went to the hospital last night. / Peter said that George _____ (go) to the hospital the preceding night.
12. I enjoy playing golf on Saturdays. / Ken says that he _____ (enjoy) playing golf on Saturdays.
13. I will change jobs soon. / Jennifer told me she _____ (change) jobs soon.
14. Frank is getting married in July. / Anna tells me that Frank _____ (get married) in July.
15. October is the best month of the year. / The teacher says that October _____ (be) the best month of the year.
16. Sarah wants to buy a new house. / Jack told me that his sister _____ (want) to buy a new house.
17. They are working hard on the new project. / The boss told me that they _____ (work) hard on the new project.
18. We've lived here for ten years. / Frank told me that they _____ (live) there for ten years.
19. I take the subway to work every day. / Ken tells me he _____ (take) the subway to work every day.
20. Angela prepared lamb for dinner yesterday. / Peter told us that Angela _____ (prepare) lamb for dinner the day before.

Worksheet Answers

1. I'm working in Dallas today. / He said he **was working** in Dallas that day.
2. I think he will win the election. / She said she **thought** he **would win** the election.
3. Anna lives in London. / Peter says Anna **lives** in London.
4. My father is going to visit us next week. / Frank said his father **was going to visit** them the following week.
5. They bought a brand new Mercedes! / She said they **had bought** a brand new Mercedes.
6. I have worked at the company since 1997. / She said she **had worked** at the company since 1997.
7. They are watching TV at the moment. / She said they **were watching** TV at that moment.
8. Francis drives to work every day. / He said Francis **drove** to work every day.
9. Alan thought about changing his job last year. / Alan said that he **had thought** about changing his job the previous year.
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