Reported Speech
Overview and definitions

Direct speech means to say exactly what someone else said. It is usually put inside quotation marks ("...").

Bob: “I have the package.”

Bob says, "I have the package."

Reported speech (also called indirect speech) means to say what someone else said, without actually quoting them. Meaning, you don't necessarily use their words.

You don't use quotation marks with reported speech.

Bob: “I have the package.”

Bob says he has the package.

Reporting Verbs

To report what someone said we usually use verbs such as:

Say, tell, ask, explain, request, etc.

For example:

- She says we should go.
- They told us to bring our stuff.
• He asked them the time.

• I explained the rules to her.

The Word THAT

The word THAT can be used after reporting verbs to begin the statement. But remember: it is optional.

You can use it or leave it out, as you prefer.

For example:

• She says they are full = She says that they are full

• I told them we could help = I told them that we could help

• I suggest we start = I suggest that we start

How to Report

When you quote what someone else has said (direct speech) it's very simple: nothing changes and you put the statement between quotation marks.

But when you report a statement (tell it in your own words), there are obviously some necessary changes.
Reported speech – changes

Pronouns

If there are any pronouns present, you may have to change them.

Examples for when and how to change pronouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct speech</th>
<th>Reported speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She says, &quot;I like ice cream.&quot;</td>
<td>She says she likes ice cream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They say, &quot;You are right.&quot;</td>
<td>They say we are right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He says, &quot;My name is Gary.&quot;</td>
<td>He says his name is Gary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Third Person Singular Verbs

Verbs in the third person singular form usually get an S at the end:

- I cook => He cooks
- We talk => She talks
- You have => It has
- I am => He is

So when reporting speech we must apply this rule.
Examples for when and how to change verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct speech</th>
<th>Reported speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He says, &quot;I work every day.&quot;</td>
<td>He says he works every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She says, &quot;I am a big girl.&quot;</td>
<td>She says she is a big girl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie says, &quot;I have a question.&quot;</td>
<td>Bonnie says she has a question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Place and Time Expressions

In many cases, when you report someone's speech you are in a different place, and almost always in different point of time (we usually report in the present what someone told us before, in the past).

So we need to change the place and time expressions accordingly.

Examples for when and how to change place and time expressions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct speech</th>
<th>Reported speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She said, &quot;I work here.&quot;</td>
<td>She said she worked there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They said, &quot;We are eating now.&quot;</td>
<td>They said they were eating then.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You said, &quot;She sings today.&quot;</td>
<td>You said she sang that day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He said, &quot;I will come tomorrow.&quot;</td>
<td>He said he would come the following day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A List of Common Place and Time Expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>this</th>
<th>that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>these</td>
<td>those</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here</td>
<td>there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>now</td>
<td>then / at the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>today</td>
<td>that day / yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yesterday</td>
<td>the day before / the previous day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a week ago / last week</td>
<td>a week before / the previous week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>last month</td>
<td>the month before / the previous month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>next year</td>
<td>the following year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in three years</td>
<td>three years from then</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** With these things, always use your common sense. If you are reporting something that someone said ten minutes ago, and your location is still the same, and the time frame is still the same, then don't change these place and time expressions.
For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct speech</th>
<th>Reported speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ten minutes ago you said,</td>
<td>Ten minutes ago you said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We have a lot of work today.&quot;</td>
<td>we had a lot of work today.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tense Backshift**

**Backshift** is the changing of a tense when reporting what someone said. When reporting what somebody said in the past, the tenses of the verbs in the reported statement go one step backwards.

Samantha: “I am sorry.”

Samantha said she was sorry.

Here are some more examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct speech</th>
<th>Reported speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You said, &quot;We are late.&quot;</td>
<td>You said we were late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They said, &quot;We have plans.&quot;</td>
<td>They said they had plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He said, &quot;I work hard.&quot;</td>
<td>He said he worked hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She said, &quot;I drink water.&quot;</td>
<td>She said she drank water.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercises

A. Match the boxes below. On the left you see direct speech, and on the right is reported speech. Sometimes the words are a little different, so be sure to find the same meaning.

1. “I am so sleepy!”  a. He said they didn’t eat candy.
2. “We take the bus to work.”  b. She said she was tired.
4. “We have lots to do.”  d. He said they took the bus.
5. “Julie likes sports.”  e. They said they were busy.

B. Write the reported speech for the statements below.

1. “We go to the park on the weekend to have picnics.”
   He said ________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

2. “We try to read to our kids every day.”
   He said __________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

3. “It is important to notify the manager of any changes.”
   They said ______________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
4. “They want to have a phone conference this week.”

My boss said ____________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

5. “I cook Mexican food sometimes for a little variety.”

She said ________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

C. Write the direct speech for the examples below.

1. She said she liked to watch adventure movies.

_______________________________________________________________________

2. My mother said she needed more rest.

_______________________________________________________________________

3. Todd said he went to the gym every week.

_______________________________________________________________________

4. Sarah said she listened to rock music.

_______________________________________________________________________

5. They said they ate lots of salad with dinner.

_______________________________________________________________________
D. Complete the following sentences with the correct person, place, time, or possessive word.

1. “Hailey goes to work at 7am. She left a couple of minutes ago.”
   
   He said that ________ left ________________________________.

2. “My brothers have a big party tomorrow.”
   
   She said that _______________ had a big party ________________.

3. “I really hate going to my biology class. It’s too difficult!”
   
   Melanie said that __________ hated going to _________ biology class.

4. “Thank goodness it’s Friday! I was ready for the weekend yesterday!”
   
   She said she was ready for the weekend on _______________________.

5. “This movie came out three weeks ago. I saw it last weekend.”
   
   He said _________ movie came out ___________________________ and _______ saw it ________________________.

E. Write direct speech for the examples below. Be sure to change the underlined words. Be sure to use quotation marks. Leave the verbs in the simple past.

1. They said they went to the park the week before.
   
   ______________________________________________________
2. She said she listened to that CD three times.

_______________________________________________________________________

3. They said their shoes were all wet.

_______________________________________________________________________

4. She said she had English class that afternoon.

_______________________________________________________________________

5. He said they talked on the phone two days before.

_______________________________________________________________________

F. Make reported speech for these examples. Be sure to change the underlined words.

1. “I want the shoes in this picture.”

_______________________________________________________________________

2. “I work here in this building.”

_______________________________________________________________________
3. “I have lunch with my friends on Tuesdays.”

4. “We have a meeting tomorrow.”

5. “Our new friends like this apartment.”
Answer Key

A. Match the boxes below. On the left you see direct speech, and on the right is reported speech. Sometimes the words are a little different, so be sure to find the same meaning.

1. “I am so sleepy!”
   b. She said she was tired.

2. “We take the bus to work.”
   d. He said they took the bus.

3. “The kids don’t eat sweets.”
   a. He said they didn’t eat candy.

4. “We have lots to do.”
   e. They said they were busy.

5. “Julie likes sports.”
   c. He said she enjoyed sports.

B. Write the reported speech for the statements below.

1. “We go to the park on the weekend to have picnics.”
   He said they went to the park on the weekend to have picnics.

2. “We try to read to our kids every day.”
   He said they tried to read to their kids every day.
3. “It is important to notify the manager of any changes.”
   They said it was important to notify the manager of any changes.

4. “They want to have a phone conference this week.”
   My boss said they wanted to have a phone conference that week.

5. “I cook Mexican food sometimes for a little variety.”
   She said she cooks Mexican food sometimes for a little variety.

C. Write the direct speech for the examples below.

1. She said she liked to watch adventure movies.
   “I like to watch adventure movies.”

2. My mother said she needed more rest.
   “I need more rest.”

3. Todd said he went to the gym every week.
   “I go to the gym every week.”

4. Sarah said she listened to rock music.
   “I listen to rock music.”

5. They said they ate lots of salad with dinner.
   “We eat lots of salad with dinner.”
D. Complete the following sentences with the correct person, place, time, or possessive word.

1. “Hailey goes to work at 7am. She left a couple of minutes ago.”
   He said that she left a couple of minutes before.

2. “My brothers have a big party tomorrow.”
   She said that they had a big party the next day.

3. “I really hate going to my biology class. It’s too difficult!”
   Melanie said that she hated going to her biology class.

4. “Thank goodness it’s Friday! I was ready for the weekend yesterday!”
   She said she was ready for the weekend on Thursday.

5. “This movie came out three weeks ago. I saw it last weekend.”
   He said that movie came out three weeks before and he saw it the weekend before.

E. Write direct speech for the examples below. Be sure to change the underlined words. Be sure to use quotation marks. Leave the verbs in the simple past.

1. They said they went to the park the week before.
   “We went to the park last week.”

2. She said she listened to that CD three times.
   “I listened to this CD three times.”

3. They said their shoes were all wet.
   “Our shoes were all wet.”
4. She said she had English class that afternoon.
   “I had English class this afternoon.”

5. He said they talked on the phone two days before.
   “We talked on the phone two days ago.”

F. Make reported speech for these examples. Be sure to change the underlined words.

1. “I want the shoes in this picture.”
   She said she wanted the shoes in that picture.

2. “I work here in this building.”
   He said he worked there in that building.

3. “I have lunch with my friends on Tuesdays.”
   She said she had lunch with her friends on Tuesdays.

4. “We have a meeting tomorrow.”
   He said they had a meeting the next day.

5. “Our new friends like this apartment.”
   He said their new friends liked that apartment.