

There are two ways to report what someone says or thinks:

1. **Direct speech** shows a person's exact words. Quotation marks ("...") are a sign that the words are the EXACT words that a person used.

Direct speech:

Maria asked, "Where are you going?"

John replied, "I'm going home."

2. **Reported speech** puts the speaker's words or ideas into a sentence without quotation marks. Noun clauses are usually used. (In reported speech, the reader does not assume that the words are the speaker's exact words; often, they are a paraphrase of the speaker's words.

Reported speech:

Maria asked John where he was going.

John said he was going home.

Note: Use of the word "*that*" is optional in reported speech. Both of the following sentences are correct:
The boy said *that* he was lost. The boy said he was lost.

VERB TENSE IN REPORTED SPEECH

When you report what someone said in the past, you usually shift back a verb tense from the tense the speaker used. These are some examples of verb shifts:

simple present → simple past

past → past perfect

present perfect → past perfect

will → *would*

can → *could*

Quotation

"I *am* hungry."

"I *saw* them leave."

"Where *have* they *gone*?"

"Will you *help* me?"

"I *can't remember* your name."

Reported speech

She stated that she *was* hungry

Pat said he *had seen* them leave.

James wondered where they *had gone*.

I asked Alex if he *would help* me.

Lisa said she *couldn't remember* my name.

Note: If the reported information is still true, you may use the same tense.

"The exam *will be* next week."

Dr. Park said the exam *will be* next week.

QUESTIONS IN REPORTED SPEECH

Word order: The word order in a reported question is the same as in a statement. The subject comes before the verb.

Question: Are you ready?

Statement: I am ready

Question in reported speech: She wanted to know if I was ready.

Punctuation: If the sentence is a statement, end it with a period (.) even if it *contains* a reported question.

Statement containing a reported question:

She asked me what I thought of the book.

Question containing a reported question:

Did she ask what you thought of the book?

YES/NO QUESTIONS

To change a yes/no question to a noun clause in reported speech, introduce the noun clause with *if* or *whether*. *Whether or not* may also be used.

Quotation	Reported Speech
“Did you turn off the coffee pot?”	I asked Amy <i>if</i> she had turned off the coffee pot.
“Is supper ready?”	Eli wanted to know <i>whether</i> supper was ready.
“Will you be at the party?”	Paul asked me <i>whether or not</i> I would be at the party.
“Should I tell her the news?”	Jack wondered <i>whether</i> he should tell Maria the news. Jack wanted to know <i>if</i> he should tell Maria the news. Jack asked <i>whether or not</i> he should tell Maria the news.

INFORMATION QUESTIONS

To change an information question to a noun clause in reported speech, *begin the noun clause with the question word*, and remember to use *sentence word order*.

Quotation	Reported Speech
“Where do they live?”	Abdul wanted to know <i>where they live</i> .
“What time is it?”	Do you know <i>what time it is?</i>
“Why did you say that?”	Pedro asked me <i>why I had said that</i> .
“Where will you stay?”	Have you decided <i>where you will stay?</i>

PRONOUNS

The person who is reporting what someone said is usually different from the person who made the original statement. As a result, pronouns in reported speech often change.

Quotation	Reported Speech
“ <i>I</i> am hungry.”	Ciara said <i>she</i> was hungry.
“Where will <i>you</i> be?”	Anne wanted to know where <i>I</i> would be.
“Have <i>you</i> seen <i>my</i> glasses?”	David asked me if <i>I</i> had seen <i>his</i> glasses.

PLACE AND TIME

Changes in the situation between direct and reported speech can result in changes to words indicating place and time.

Quotation	Reported Speech
“I don’t like <i>this</i> book.”	Jaime said he didn’t like <i>that</i> book.
“I’ll see you <i>tomorrow</i> .” (spoken on Thursday)	Michiko said she would see me <i>yesterday</i> . (reported on Saturday)

RECOMMEND & SUGGEST

The subjunctive, or base, form of the verb (no tense, without *to*) is used in reported speech when the main verb is *recommend* or *suggest*.

Quotation	Reported Speech
“You <i>should arrive</i> early.”	John <i>recommended</i> that we <i>arrive</i> early.
“Don’t <i>wait</i> to apply.”	Anna <i>recommended</i> that I <i>not wait</i> to apply.
“Kathy <i>should call</i> me.”	I will <i>suggest</i> that Kathy <i>call</i> you.”

INFINITIVES

Infinitives (to + the simple form of the verb) may sometimes be used instead of noun clauses, especially in **commands** and in **requests for action or permission**.

Commands can be reported two ways:

1. A noun clause with a modal (usually should)
2. An infinitive

Quotation

“*Call* me when you get home.”

“*Plan* ahead.”

Reported Speech

Mom said we *should call* her when we get home.
Mom said *to call* her when we get home.

My father told me that I *should plan* ahead.
My father told me *to plan* ahead.

Requests for action or permission can be reported two ways:

1. A noun clause with *if*
2. An infinitive

Quotation

Action:

“*Will you carry* the box for me?”

Permission:

“*Can I make* an appointment?”

Reported Speech

She asked me *if I would carry* the box for her.
She asked me *to carry the* box for her.

Jim asked *if he could make* an appointment.
Jim asked *to make* an appointment.