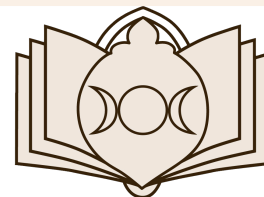


Reported Speech



**ISABEL'S
CLASSROOM**

01 / A message changes hands | B1-B2

Isabelsclassroom.com
youtube.com/isabelsclassroom



Someone said it. You're passing it on. Gossip, but with grammar.

Direct or reported?

Direct speech: exact words	Reported speech: the message
Mia said, "I am tired."	Mia said (that) she was tired.
Tom said to me, "I need your notes."	Tom told me (that) he needed my notes.

Direct speech uses quotation marks. Reported speech gives the meaning in a new sentence, without quotation marks. In reported statements, that is often optional.

Four things to check

Check	Ask yourself
1. Reporting verb	Am I reporting a statement, a question or an instruction?
2. Pronouns	Who is speaking? Who are they talking about or talking to?
3. Verb forms	Does a past reporting verb make backshifting appropriate?
4. Time and place	Have the day, location or point of view changed?

Follow the people, not a pronoun spell

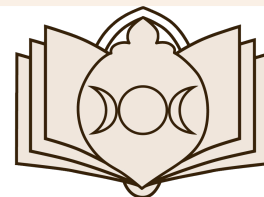
Mia to me: "I like your idea." → Mia told me that she liked my idea.

If I report my own words, I may stay I: "I'm busy." → I said I was busy.

Pronouns change according to meaning. You does not always become he.



Reported Speech



**ISABEL'S
CLASSROOM**

02 / SAY and TELL: similar message, different recipe

Isabelsclassroom.com

youtube.com/isabelsclassroom



SAY	TELL
say / said / said	tell / told / told
say + (that) + clause She said (that) she was busy.	tell + person + (that) + clause She told me (that) she was busy.
say + to + person She said to me that she was busy.	tell + person, without to She told me that she was busy.
"She said me..." is incorrect.	"She told that..." needs a listener in this reporting pattern.

Choose the right reporting verb

Message type	Useful pattern	Example
Statement	said (that)... / told me (that)...	He told me he was ready.
Question	asked + (person) + if / wh-word...	She asked if I was ready.
Instruction	told + person + to + verb	He told us to wait.
Request	asked + person + to + verb	She asked me to help.

The listener can be me, you, him, her, us, them or a name. With tell, use an object pronoun: She told me, not She told I.

A useful exception

TELL does not always need a listener: tell the truth, tell a lie, tell a story, tell a joke. These are different patterns. English leaves loopholes. Naturally.

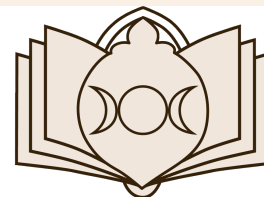
Present reporting verbs

A present reporting verb does not normally trigger backshift:

"I'm busy." → She says she is busy.

The next table shows common changes after a past reporting verb.

Reported Speech



**ISABEL'S
CLASSROOM**

03 / Backshifting: the tense table

Isabelsclassroom.com
youtube.com/isabelsclassroom



When reporting later with said, told or asked, we often move the verb one step back. These are common patterns, not changes to make without thinking.

Direct form	Reported form	Direct → reported example
Present Simple	Past Simple	"I work here." → She said she worked there.
Present Continuous	Past Continuous	"I'm studying." → He said he was studying.
Present Perfect Simple	Past Perfect Simple	"I've finished." → She said she had finished.
Present Perfect Continuous	Past Perfect Continuous	"I've been waiting." → He said he had been waiting.
Past Simple	Past Perfect Simple	"I lost my key." → She said she had lost her key.
Past Continuous	Past Perfect Continuous	"I was sleeping." → He said he had been sleeping.
Past Perfect Simple	No change	"I had left." → She said she had left.
Past Perfect Continuous	No change	"I had been working." → He said he had been working.
am / is / are going to	was / were going to	"I'm going to apply." → She said she was going to apply.

Backshift is not always necessary

If the message is still true or relevant, we can retain the original tense:

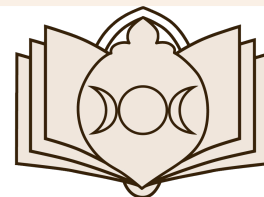
"I live in Brno." → She said she lives in Brno. (Still her home.)

She said she lived in Brno is also possible; it does not prove she moved.

General truths often stay present: The teacher said that the Earth orbits the Sun. Past events may stay past when their timing is already clear. Choose the form that fits the meaning and context.



Reported Speech



**ISABEL'S
CLASSROOM**

04 / Modal verbs: what changes?

Isabelsclassroom.com
youtube.com/isabelsclassroom



Direct modal	Common reported form	Example
will	would	"I'll call." → She said she would call.
can	could	"I can swim." → He said he could swim.
may (possibility)	might	"I may be late." → She said she might be late.
may (permission)	could / was allowed to	"You may leave." → She said we were allowed to leave.
must (obligation)	usually had to	"I must leave." → He said he had to leave.
must (deduction)	usually stays must	"She must be tired." → He said she must be tired.
have to	had to	"I have to work." → She said she had to work.
shall (future with I / we)	would	"I shall return." → He said he would return.
shall (asking for advice)	should	"What shall I do?" → She asked what she should do.
could / would / should / might / ought to	usually no change	"You should rest." → He said I should rest.

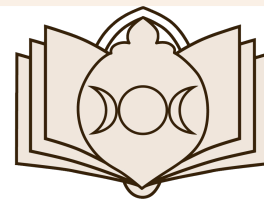
Meaning still matters

An obligation that still applies may retain must: The teacher said we must submit the work by Friday.

Mustn't expresses prohibition, so do not change it to didn't have to: "You mustn't enter." → She said we mustn't enter / weren't allowed to enter.

"Shall I help?" is an offer: He offered to help. Reporting the speaker's purpose often sounds more natural than mechanically swapping a modal.

Reported Speech



**ISABEL'S
CLASSROOM**

05 / Pronouns, time & place: change the viewpoint

Isabelsclassroom.com
youtube.com/isabelsclassroom



Change these expressions only when the reference changes. If you report the words on the same day or in the same place, the original expression may still fit.

Original expression	Possible reported equivalent
now	then / at that time
today / tonight	that day / that night
yesterday	the day before / the previous day
tomorrow	the next day / the following day
last week / next week	the previous week / the following week
two days ago	two days before / two days earlier
here	there
this / these	that / those (if the reference changes)

A complete example

On Monday, Eva says to me at her office: "I'll send you this file tomorrow."

On Tuesday, elsewhere, I report: Eva told me that she would send me that file that day.

"The following day" would also refer to Tuesday. The calendar decides, not the table.

No change needed? Leave it alone.

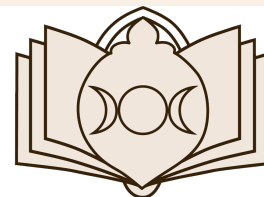
At 10 a.m.: "I'll call you tonight."

Reported at noon the same day: She said she would call me tonight.

We are still talking about the same evening. Don't send it through a time portal for no reason.



Reported Speech



06 / Reported questions: no inversion invited

**ISABEL'S
CLASSROOM**

Isabelsclassroom.com
youtube.com/isabelsclassroom



ASK + (PERSON) + IF / WHETHER or WH-WORD

Question type	Direct question	Reported question
Yes / no	"Are you ready?"	She asked me if / whether I was ready.
Yes / no with do	"Do you work here?"	He asked me if I worked there.
Wh-question	"Where do you live?"	She asked where I lived.
Wh-question with did	"When did you arrive?"	He asked when I had arrived.
Wh-question with a modal	"What can you do?"	She asked what I could do.
Subject question	"Who called?"	He asked who had called.

Statement word order

"Where is she?" → He asked where she was.

Not: He asked where was she.

Remove question-form do / does / did: "What do you want?" → She asked what I wanted. Keep the tense in the main verb.

The punctuation follows the whole sentence

A reported question inside a statement normally ends with a full stop:

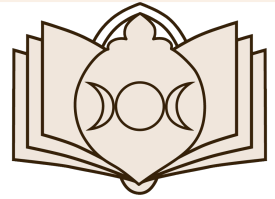
She asked where I lived.

An actual question still needs a question mark: Did she ask where you lived?

Commands and requests

Direct words	Reported instruction / request
"Close the door."	She told me to close the door.
"Please help me."	He asked me to help him.
"Don't touch it."	She told us not to touch it.

Reported Speech



**ISABEL'S
CLASSROOM**

07 / Practice: pass the message on

Isabelsclassroom.com
youtube.com/isabelsclassroom

_____ ◇◇◇ _____

For tasks 2-4, report the words later. Use past reporting verbs and the standard backshift patterns. Names and listeners are given to keep pronouns clear.

1. SAY or TELL? Use SAID or TOLD

1. Nina _____ me she was tired.
2. Ben _____ that he needed a break.
3. Sara _____ to us that she was leaving.
4. I _____ them the truth.

2. Report the statements

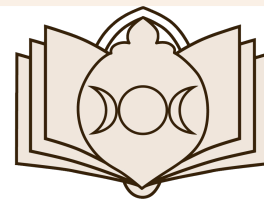
1. Eva: "I work at a bookshop." → Eva said...
2. Max to me: "I'm reading your notes." → Max told me...
3. Nina: "I've finished the report." → Nina said...
4. Ben: "I lost my phone." → Ben said...
5. Sara: "I can help." → Sara said...
6. Leo: "I must leave." (An obligation then.) → Leo said...

3. Report the questions

1. Eva to me: "Are you busy?" → Eva asked me...
2. Max to Nina: "Where do you live?" → Max asked Nina...
3. Ben to us: "When did you arrive?" → Ben asked us...
4. Sara to me: "Can you drive?" → Sara asked me...



Reported Speech



**ISABEL'S
CLASSROOM**

08 / Practice: instructions & your turn

Isabelsclassroom.com
youtube.com/isabelsclassroom

◇◇◇

4. Report the instructions

1. The teacher to us: "Open your books."
 2. Nina to me: "Please wait for me."
 3. The guide to us: "Don't enter this room." (Report elsewhere.)
-
-

5. Correct the grammar gremlins

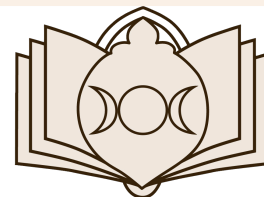
1. She said me she was ready.
2. He asked where did I live.
3. They told us don't touch the painting.
4. She said I didn't have to enter. (Original: "You mustn't enter.")

6. Your turn

Ask a partner about their routine, plans and recent activities. Report two statements and two questions. Add one request. Check people, verbs and viewpoint.



Reported Speech



**ISABEL'S
CLASSROOM**

09 / Answer key: the spell check

Isabelsclassroom.com
youtube.com/isabelsclassroom



1. SAY and TELL

1. told; 2. said; 3. said; 4. told

2. Statements

1. Eva said (that) she worked at a bookshop.
2. Max told me (that) he was reading my notes.
3. Nina said (that) she had finished the report.
4. Ben said (that) he had lost his phone.
5. Sara said (that) she could help.
6. Leo said (that) he had to leave.

3. Questions

1. Eva asked me if / whether I was busy.
2. Max asked Nina where she lived.
3. Ben asked us when we had arrived.
4. Sara asked me if / whether I could drive.

4. Instructions and requests

1. The teacher told us to open our books.
2. Nina asked me to wait for her.
3. The guide told us not to enter that room.

5. Gremlins, defeated

1. She told me she was ready. / She said to me she was ready.
2. He asked where I lived.
3. They told us not to touch the painting.
4. She said I mustn't enter / wasn't allowed to enter.

6. Possible examples

Mia said she worked in a café. She told me she was studying for an exam. She asked if I liked my job. She asked what I had done at the weekend. She asked me to send her my notes.

These answers follow the exercise instruction to backshift. In real conversation, other forms may be appropriate if the information is still true or the context is different. Full and contracted forms are both acceptable.

