St. Louis Community College

Reported Speech & Direct Speech

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	*will → would*
past → past perfect	*can → could*
present perfect → past perfect	

Quotation	Reported speech
"I *am* hungry."	She stated that she *was* hungry
"I *saw* them leave."	Pat said he *had seen* them leave.
"Where *have* they *gone*?"	James wondered where they *had gone*.
"Will you *help* me?'	I asked Alex if he *would help* me.
"I *can't remember* your name."	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 <u>statement</u>, 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 <u>if</u> or <u>whether</u>. <u>Whether or no</u>t may also be used.

Quotation	Reported Speech
"Did you turn off the coffee pot?"	I asked Amy ***if*** she had turned off the coffee pot.
"Is supper ready?"	Eli wanted to know ***whether*** supper was ready.
"Will you be at the party?"	Paul asked me ***whether or not*** I would be at the party.
"Should I tell her the news?"	Jack wondered ***whether*** he should tell Maria the news.
	Jack wanted to know ***if*** he should tell Maria the news.
	Jack asked ***whether or not*** 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 ***where they live***.
"What time is it?"	Do you know ***what time it is?***
"Why did you say that?"	Pedro asked me ***why I had said that.***
"Where will you stay?"	Have you decided ***where you will stay?***

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* am hungry."	Ciara said *she* was hungry.
"Where will *you* be?"	Anne wanted to know where *I* would be.
"Have *you* seen *my* glasses?"	David asked me if *I* had seen *his* 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 *this* book."	Jaime said he didn't like *that* book.
"I'll see you *tomorrow*." (spoken on Thursday)	Michiko said she would see me *yesterday*. (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 *should arrive* early."	John *recommended* that we *arrive* early.
"Don't *wait* to apply."	Anna *recommended* that I *not wait* to apply.
"Kathy *should call* me."	I will *suggest* that Kathy *call* 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	Reported Speech
"*Call* me when you get home."	Mom said we *should call* her when we get home.
	Mom said *to call* her when we get home.
"*Plan* ahead."	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	Reported Speech

Action:

Quotation	Reported Speech
"*Will you carry* the box for me?"	She asked me *if I would carry* the box for her.
	She asked me *to carry the* box for her.

Permission:

Quotation	Reported Speech
"*Can I make* an appointment?	Jim asked *if he could make* an appointment.
	Jim asked *to make* an appointment.