

English Grammar: Reported Speech

Look at the following structures, which are used to report a conversation.

- He **said** that his name **was** Fred.
- He **told me** that he **lived** in Curitiba.
- He **asked me** if I **worked** at home.

We use **reported speech** to report what someone else previously said or asked. To do this, we use the verbs: **say** / **tell** / **ask** / **inform** / **report** / etc. For example:

- Mary: "*I **study** engineering.*"
Mary **said** that she **studied** engineering.
- Jane: "*I **need** some money for a new car.*"
Jane **told me** that she **needed** some money for a new car.
- Peter: "*Where do you **live**?*"
Peter **asked me** where I **lived**.
- Teacher: "*You **are** the best student.*"
My teacher **informed me** that I **was** the best student.

The word "that" (Portuguese: "*que*") is optional:

- He said **that** his name was Fred.
- He said his name was Fred.
- He told me **that** he lived in Curitiba.
- He told me he lived in Curitiba.
- Mary said **that** she studied engineering.
- Mary said she studied engineering.

When we report what someone previously said or asked, some changes are made in the verbs and other words:

1) Present Simple changes to Past Simple, and Present Continuous changes to Past Continuous:

Andrew: "*I **want** to go home.*" (**present simple**)
Andrew said (that) he **wanted** to go home. (**past simple**)

Peter: "*I'm **getting** hungry.*" (**present continuous**)
Peter said (that) he **was getting** hungry. (**past continuous**)

2) Past Simple and Present Perfect both change to Past Perfect:

Sally: "*I **bought** a new car yesterday!*" (**past simple**)
Sally said (that) she **had bought** a new car the day before. (**past perfect**)

Sally: "*I **have bought** a new car!*" (**present perfect**)
Sally said (that) she **had bought** a new car. (**past perfect**)

3) Past Continuous changes to Past Perfect Continuous:

Suzy: "*I **was eating** dinner at 6pm.*" (**past continuous**)
Suzy said (that) she **had been eating** dinner at 6pm. (**past perfect continuous**)

4) Future Simple (am/is/are going to) changes to "was/were going to":

Billy: "***I'm going to watch a film after dinner.***"

Billy said (that) he **was going to** watch a film after dinner.

Jeff: "***We are going to buy a house in Miami.***"

Jeff said (that) they **were going to** buy a house in Miami.

5) Modal verbs change:

- can -> could (can't -> couldn't)
- will -> would (won't -> wouldn't)
- have to / must -> had to

Doctor: "***I will schedule an appointment for you.***"

The doctor said (that) he **would** schedule an appointment for me.

Doctor: "***I can schedule an appointment, if you like.***"

The doctor said (that) he **could** schedule an appointment if I **liked**.

Doctor: "***I have to attend to the next patient.***"

The doctor said (that) he **had to** attend to the next patient.

Doctor: "***I must attend to the next patient.***"

The doctor said (that) he **had to** attend to the next patient.

6) Reference words for time and place change:

- here → there
- this → that
- these → those
- now → at that time
- tomorrow → the following day
- next week → the following week
- yesterday → the day before / the previous day
- last week → the next week / the previous week

Peter: "***I will finish the job tomorrow.***"

Peter said (that) he would finish the job **the next day**.

Colin: "***I will finish this job next week.***"

Colin said (that) he would finish **that job the following week**.

Mike: "***I will work here next month.***"

Mike said (that) he would work **there the following month**.

George: "***I will finish now.***"

George said (that) he would finish **at that time**.

Ben: "***I finished the job yesterday.***"

Ben said (that) he had finished the job **the day before**.

7) When we report a **question**, we use the word “**if**” for a Yes/No question, and/or convert the phrase to an **affirmative structure**:

- David: “**Do you work on Saturdays?**”
David asked me **if I worked** on Saturdays.
- John: “**Is your name Samuel?**”
John asked me **if my name was** Samuel.
- Chris: “**Why are you crying?**”
Chris asked me why **I was crying**.
- Bob: “**Where are you going?**”
Bob asked me where **I was going**.
- Tom: “**When is your birthday?**”
Tom asked me when my birthday **was**.

Recommended video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nEniRxPkas> (12 mins)

Exercise. Complete the sentences using reported speech.

1. Rob: “I am travelling to New York tomorrow.”
Rob said that he _____ to New York _____.
2. Adam: “I bought a very good winter coat in the sale.”
Adam said that he _____ a very good winter coat in the sale.
3. Teacher to students: “Have you done your homework?”
The teacher asked the students if they _____ their homework.
4. Doctor: “You will improve if you lose weight.”
The doctor told him that he _____ improve if he _____ weight.
5. Pat: “We went to the beach yesterday.”
Pat said that they _____ to the beach _____.
6. Alice: “Can I borrow your red shoes?”
Alice asked me if she _____ borrow _____ red shoes.
7. Simon: “Is your father at home?”
Simon asked me _____ at home .
8. Dentist: “You need to have an X-ray.”
The dentist said that _____ to have an X-ray.
9. Joshua: “I must visit Sarah in June.”
Joshua said that _____ visit Sarah in June.
10. Fred: “Why do you always take your shoes off at home?”
Fred asked me _____ always _____ shoes off at home.
11. Mike: “My dad was driving for ten hours.”
Mike told me that _____ for ten hours.
12. Liz: “We are going to order pizza later.”
Liz said that _____ to order pizza later.