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Direct and reported speech

Part 1 · Words, people and time





Grammar at a glance

When you want to...	Form to use	Worked example
Quote or report	exact words / reported clause	“I am ready,” said Noor. Noor said she was ready.
Track the speaker and listener	tell + person / say + clause	Noor told Ravi that she was ready.
Shift the time viewpoint	am working / was working	She said she was working then.
Keep the date and place clear	tomorrow / the following day	On Monday she said she would go on Tuesday.

SELECT A ROW TO OPEN ITS LESSON

DIRECT AND REPORTED SPEECH

Direct quotations and indirect reports



The verified transcript records Lily saying, “I have a red bag.” Sam is listening. Noor reports the message immediately.

Direct speech gives exact words in quotation marks. An indirect report tells what someone said using the reporter’s wording.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Quote the transcript	Lily says, “I have a red bag.”	The words inside quotation marks are Lily’s exact recorded words, including I.
Report the meaning	Lily says that she has a red bag.	Noor uses her own reporting sentence. She refers to Lily; quotation marks are not placed around this changed wording.
Check a false quote	Lily says, “She has a red bag.”	This does not match the verified transcript. A paraphrase cannot be passed off as an exact quotation.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Source	Exact quoted viewpoint	Reported viewpoint
Lily says	I have a red bag	she has a red bag

Can a paraphrase be put in quotation marks because its meaning is accurate?

Not as a verified exact quotation. An accurate paraphrase still changes the words; label and attribute it as an indirect report.

YOUR TURN

Which records exact words?

Direct speech with a verified quotation / A paraphrase labelled exact without a transcript

> Answer • Direct speech with a verified quotation
>
> Direct speech makes a claim about wording.

DIRECT AND REPORTED SPEECH

Speaker, listener, pronouns, say and tell



Lily tells Sam, “You can use my bag.” Noor reports this immediately to the editor. You means Sam; my identifies Lily as owner. Later Sam reports the same permission himself. The message’s participants stay the same even when the reporter changes.

Keep track of the original speaker and listener. Say something to someone or tell someone something.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Noor reports	Lily tells Sam that he can use her bag.	He refers to listener Sam; her refers to speaker Lily. Do not replace every pronoun with the same person.
Sam reports	Lily tells me that I can use her bag.	Sam becomes I/me in his own report. The allowed user is still Sam and the owner is still Lily.
Choose say or tell	Lily says to Sam that he can use her bag.	Says to Sam is possible; tells Sam needs no to. Do not write tells to Sam or says Sam as the corresponding statement frame.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Original you	Original my	Reporter Sam
Sam	Lily’s	me / I

Can every you simply become he in reported speech?

No. You may refer to one person, several people, or the reporter. Identify the listener and reporting viewpoint, then choose a clear pronoun or name.

YOUR TURN

Who does my refer to in a direct quote?

Always the later reporter / The original speaker

> **Answer • The original speaker**
> Anchor the possessive to the quoted speaker.

DIRECT AND REPORTED SPEECH

Backshift, continuing truth and time reference



Yesterday Lily said, “I am watering the plant.” Today Noor reports those words. In a second interview Lily said, “I have packed the tools.” The gate is still locked today. Decide which facts still hold at the time of reporting.

Reporting from a later viewpoint often shifts the tense back. A continuing fact can sometimes keep its original tense.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Use backshift	Lily said that she was watering the plant.	Am watering becomes was watering under the requested past-reporting viewpoint. It places the activity at the original speaking time.
Preserve earlier completion	Lily said that she had packed the tools.	Have packed becomes had packed in this conventional backshifted report. The packing preceded her original statement.
Keep a current fact	Lily said that the gate is locked.	If Noor presents the gate’s still-current state as true now, retaining present is possible. The backshifted was locked is also possible from the past viewpoint.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Original progress to later report	Original completion to later report	Confirmed continuing state
am watering to was watering	have packed to had packed	said the gate is locked

Does backshift automatically mean the statement is no longer true?

No. It can locate the reported content relative to a past utterance. Whether the state continues must come from context or later evidence.

YOUR TURN

Requested conventional backshift of is working:
was working / will work

> **Answer • was working**
> Shift the full continuous group.

DIRECT AND REPORTED SPEECH

Time, place and demonstratives



On Monday in the courtyard, Lily says to Sam, “I will bring my bag here tomorrow.” Noor reports this on Tuesday from the office. The planned place remains the courtyard and the planned day remains Tuesday. Whether Lily actually brings it is not yet confirmed.

Change time and place expressions when the reporting situation changes. Make sure tomorrow still points to the intended day.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
Original context	Lily says, “I will bring my bag here tomorrow.”	Here means the courtyard and tomorrow means Tuesday because the quote is anchored to Monday’s speaker.
Later, elsewhere	Lily said that she would bring her bag to the courtyard on Tuesday.	Explicit place and day preserve the references from Tuesday’s office. Would is future relative to the original past utterance.
Same day and place	Lily says that she will bring her bag here tomorrow.	In a different immediate report on Monday in the courtyard, here and tomorrow can stay because their references have not changed.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Original tomorrow	Original here	Later explicit report
Tuesday	the courtyard	to the courtyard on Tuesday

Must today, tomorrow, here and this always change in every indirect report?

No. Change them when needed to preserve their references from the new viewpoint. Retain them when their references still match; use explicit names or dates when ambiguity remains.

YOUR TURN

A Tuesday quote says tomorrow. Which day is intended?

Thursday / Wednesday

> **Answer • Wednesday**
> Interpret the word at the original speaking time.

ONE LAST CHALLENGE

What does tomorrow mean on Friday?

On Monday, Noor said, “I will leave tomorrow.” On Friday, report her words so the listener knows the intended day.



A POSSIBLE ANSWER

Noor said she would leave on Tuesday.

Tuesday was the day after the original statement. This reports Noor’s intention.

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