

B Grammar

We can use reported speech to report in writing or speech what someone has said.

1 Tense changes

When we report what someone has said we sometimes change the tense of the main verb: we move tenses 'back' one tense.

Original tense of main verb	Tense in reported speech
present simple <i>I live in Italy.</i>	→ past simple <i>She said she lived in Italy.</i>
present continuous <i>I'm living in Italy.</i>	→ past continuous <i>She said she was living in Italy.</i>
past simple <i>I lived in Italy.</i>	→ past perfect <i>She said she had lived in Italy.</i>
past continuous <i>I was living in Italy.</i>	→ past perfect continuous <i>She said she had been living in Italy.</i>
present perfect <i>I've lived in Italy.</i>	→ past perfect <i>She said she had lived in Italy.</i>
past perfect <i>I'd lived in Italy.</i>	→ past perfect <i>She said she'd lived in Italy.</i>
be going to <i>I'm going to live in Italy.</i>	→ was/were going to <i>She said she was going to live in Italy.</i>
will <i>I'll live in Italy.</i>	→ would <i>She said she would live in Italy.</i>
may / might <i>I may/might live in Italy next year.</i>	→ might <i>She said she might live in Italy next year.</i>
can <i>I can live in Italy.</i>	→ could <i>She said she could live in Italy.</i>
must <i>I must live in Italy.</i>	→ had to <i>She said she had to live in Italy.</i>

However, we often choose not to change the tense. This may be because

- ◆ what we are talking about remains true:

'This has nothing to do with the figures.'

→ *He said that the job losses have nothing to do with the figures.* (at the time of reporting this fact is still true)

- ◆ the original tense was past simple or past continuous:

'We decided to change the way we operate our business two years ago.'

→ *West claimed that they decided to make changes two years ago.*

2 Reporting verbs

When we report what someone has said, we are unlikely to use exactly the same words as in the original speech. We can choose from many different reporting verbs to help us convey the general idea using fewer words than in the original speech. Here are some common reporting verbs:

reporting verb (+ that)
agree, admit, announce, argue, believe, claim, complain, deny, explain, insist, promise, propose, reply, request, say, state, suggest, think, warn: <i>The director claimed (that) they decided to make the changes two years ago.</i>
reporting verb + someone + that
assure, inform, persuade, remind, tell: <i>He assured the interviewer that the company would continue to operate in the future.</i>
reporting verb + to-infinitive
agree, ask, claim, offer, promise, propose, refuse: <i>He promised to do his best for the employees.</i>
reporting verb + someone + to-infinitive
advise, ask, encourage, invite, persuade, remind, tell, urge, warn: <i>They urged the employees to stay calm.</i>
reporting verb + preposition + -ing / noun
argue about, complain about: <i>He complained about the terrible food.</i> apologise for: <i>The company apologised for causing redundancies.</i> insist on: <i>The manager insisted on seeing the staff.</i> complain to: <i>He complained to the manager.</i>
reporting verb + someone + preposition + -ing / noun
accuse of: <i>They accused the company of planning badly.</i> advise about, remind about: <i>They reminded her about the meeting.</i> advise on, congratulate on: <i>He advised me on the deal.</i> blame for, thank for: <i>They thanked her for coming.</i>
reporting verb + -ing / noun
accept, admit, deny, suggest: <i>The director denied having financial problems.</i> <i>The employees accepted the offer of early redundancy.</i>
reporting verb + someone (+ noun)
offer, promise, refuse: <i>He offered her a job.</i>

▲ Some of the same verbs can be used in different ways (e.g. *admit, claim, offer, persuade*):
*West **claimed** that they decided to make the changes two years ago.*
*West **claimed to have decided** to make the changes two years ago.*

3 Time references etc.

We sometimes need to change other words or phrases in reported speech if they are reported at a different time from the original words:

<i>today</i> → <i>that day</i>	<i>tomorrow</i> → <i>the following day / the next day</i>
<i>yesterday</i> → <i>the day before</i>	<i>next week</i> → <i>the following week</i>
<i>now</i> → <i>then / straight away</i>	<i>this</i> → <i>that</i>
<i>here</i> → <i>there</i>	

He said he would see me tomorrow. (reported on the same day)

He said he would see me the next day. (reported at a later date)

Sometimes the context requires pronouns to change:

'I like you.' → *He said he liked her.*

'I like you.' → *I said I liked her.*

4 Reporting questions

We use statement word order when reporting questions:

I asked Mr West how he was going to deal with the problem. (~~*not I asked Mr West how was he going to deal with the problem.*~~)

To report questions with question words (*who, what, where, why, when, how*) we keep the question word:

'What has led to this situation?'

→ *The interviewer asked what had led to this situation.*

We can use *if* or *whether* to report yes/no questions:

'Are these cuts a result of Angleside's poor performance over the past five years?'

→ *I asked if/whether these cuts were the result of Angleside's poor performance over the past five years.*

⚠ We do not use a question mark for reported questions.

Grammar extra: Other ways of reporting

We can use other expressions to report speech e.g. *according to* (common in spoken and written English), *apparently*, *supposedly*, *seemingly* (more common in spoken English):

According to the radio programme, they are cutting 150 jobs.

C Grammar exercises

1 Here is a conversation between Tanya and her teacher.



When are you taking the IELTS test? Have you registered yet?



Do you feel prepared for it?

Yes. I'm doing it next Saturday.



You've made excellent progress.

Well, your classes have been really helpful, so I think so.



Oh, try not to worry. You've worked very hard.

Thank you. I'm feeling very nervous though.



Yes, I have. I think I'll be alright once I'm doing the test.



A week later, Tanya tells her friend about the conversation. Fill in the gaps.



To: Clara

From: Tanya

Subject: IELTS test on Saturday!

Hi Clara

I was talking to my teacher about my IELTS test last week. She asked

1 me when I was taking the test. I said 2 Saturday. She asked

3 prepared for it. I replied 4 really helpful. She

told 5 excellent progress. I said 6 very nervous.

She told 7 worry and said 8 very hard. I said

9 alright once I 10 the test.

2 Underline the correct verb in each sentence.

- 1 Some people argue/*remind* that banning cars from city centres would reduce pollution.
- 2 The organisation campaigns against pollution and for the environment and they *insist*/urge people to start walking and cycling more.
- 3 My boyfriend is always forgetting things so it was a good thing I *reminded*/suggested him to bring his passport when we went on holiday.
- 4 I was very unhappy with the service so I *complained*/*insisted* to the manager and he gave me a discount on my meal.
- 5 I needed to talk to my boss so I *reminded*/suggested a meeting and we arranged one for later that day.
- 6 The students felt very strongly about the issue and *refused*/*insisted* on seeing the vice-chancellor to discuss it.
- 7 I asked him really nicely but he still *refused*/*denied* to help me.
- 8 The tennis player regretted his actions and *blamed*/*apologised* for his behaviour afterwards.
- 9 Jane was having difficulties sleeping and the doctor *advised*/suggested her to take some rest from her heavy work schedule.
- 10 The armed robbers *warned*/*announced* the bank staff not to move or they might use their guns.

3 Correct the mistakes in these sentences.

- 1 I met Annie and ~~she said me~~ she was getting married. she told me / she said
- 2 The education minister encouraged students take out a loan to cover their fees.
- 3 At the interview he asked did I want to start the job tomorrow!
- 4 The speaker urged people that they should vote for him.
- 5 We agreed making our presentation to the group first.
- 6 My tutor promised mark the first draft of my dissertation immediately.
- 7 Jacques invited us going to his house for dinner on Friday.
- 8 During the Speaking module the examiner asked me what were my hobbies.
- 9 The customers complained the quality of the food.
- 10 When the college announced about the changes, everyone was worried.
- 11 I wanted to pay for myself but my boyfriend insisted to pay.
- 12 The university sent me an email asking me when would I be arriving.

- 4** Report each of the sentences below using a verb from the box. Remember that you do not need to report the original words exactly.

agree apologise ask ask deny encourage persuaded promise
 refuse suggest

1 'We are going to lower taxes and reduce unemployment!'

The government *promised to lower taxes and reduce unemployment.*

2 'I really think you should apply for the job. You'd have a good chance of getting it.'

She

3 'No, I won't help you. Do it yourself!'

He

4 'Oh, okay, I'll go to the meeting.'

She

5 'I didn't cause the accident. It wasn't me.'

He

6 'We are very sorry that we lost your application form.'

They

7 'Why aren't there many poisonous snakes in Britain?'

He

8 'Are you going to the lecture tomorrow?'

She

9 'Why don't you have a day off? You could do with a rest.'

She

10 'Please come to the theatre with me, Dan. I really think you'll enjoy it.'

'Oh, alright then, Claire.'

Claire