

UNIT 48

Reported speech (2)

- a) It is not always necessary to change the verb when you use reported speech. If you are reporting something and you feel that it is still true, you do not need to change the tense of the verb:

direct Tom said 'New York is bigger than London'.
reported Tom said (that) New York **is** (or **was**) bigger than London.
direct Ann said 'I **want** to go to New York next year'.
reported Ann said (that) she **wants** (or **wanted**) to go to New York next year.

Notice that it is also correct to change the verb into the *past*.

But you *must* use a past tense when there is a difference between what was said and what is really true. Study this example situation:

You met Ann. She said 'Jim is ill'. (*direct speech*)
Later that day you see Jim playing tennis and looking well. You say:
'I'm surprised to see you playing tennis, Jim. Ann said that you were ill'.
(*not* 'that you are ill', because he isn't ill)

Must, might, could, would, should and **ought** stay the same in reported speech. **May** in direct speech normally changes to **might** in reported speech.

- b) Say and tell

If you say *who* you are talking to, use **tell**:

– Tom **told me** (that) he didn't like Brian. (*not* 'Tom said me ...')

Otherwise use **say**:

– Tom **said** (that) he didn't like Brian. (*not* 'Tom told (that) he ...')

Also: you can't say 'Tom told about his trip to America'. You have to say:

– Tom **told us** (or **me/them/Ann** etc.) about his trip to America.

If you don't say who he told, you have to say:

– Tom **talked** (or **spoke**) about his trip to America. (*but not* 'said about')

- c) We also use the *infinitive* (to do / to stay etc.) in reported speech, especially with **tell** and **ask** (for orders and requests):

direct 'Stay in bed for a few days', the doctor said to me.

reported The doctor **told me to stay** in bed for a few days.

direct 'Don't shout', I said to Jim.

reported I **told Jim not to shout**.

direct 'Please don't tell anyone what happened', Ann said to me.

reported Ann **asked me not to tell** anyone what (had) happened.

direct 'Can you open the door for me, Tom?' Ann asked.

reported Ann **asked Tom to open** the door for her.

Said is also possible with the infinitive:

– The doctor **said to stay** in bed for a few days. (*but not* 'said me')

UNIT 48 Exercises

48.1 *In this exercise you have to write what you would say in these situations.*

Example: Ann says 'I'm tired'. Five minutes later she says 'Let's play tennis'. What do you say? You said you were tired.

- 1 Your friend says 'I'm hungry' so you go to a restaurant. When you get there he says 'I don't want to eat'. What do you say? You said
 - 2 Tom tells you 'Ann has gone away'. Later that day you meet her. What do you say? Tom told
 - 3 George said 'I don't smoke'. A few days later you see him smoking a cigarette. What do you say to him? You said
 - 4 You arranged to meet Jack. He said 'I won't be late'. At last he arrives - 20 minutes late. What do you say? You
 - 5 Sue said 'I can't come to the party tonight'. That night you see her at the party. What do you say to her?
 - 6 Ann says 'I'm working tomorrow evening'. Later that day she says 'Let's go out tomorrow evening'. What do you say?
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48.2 *Now you have to complete these sentences with said, told or talked.*

Example: Tom said that he didn't like Brian.

- 1 Jack me that he was enjoying his new job.
 - 2 Tom it was a nice restaurant but I didn't like it much.
 - 3 The doctor that I would have to rest for at least a week.
 - 4 Mrs Taylor us she wouldn't be able to come to the next meeting.
 - 5 Ann Tom that she was going away.
 - 6 George couldn't help me. He to ask Jack.
 - 7 At the meeting the chairman about the problems facing the company.
 - 8 Jill us all about her holiday in Australia.
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48.3 *Now you have to read a sentence and write a new sentence with the same meaning.*

Examples: 'Listen carefully', he said to us. He told us to listen carefully.

'Don't wait for me if I'm late', Ann said.

Ann said not to wait for her if she was late.

- 1 'Eat more fruit and vegetables', the doctor said.
The doctor said
- 2 'Read the instructions before you switch on the machine', he said to me.
He told
- 3 'Shut the door but don't lock it', she said to us.
She told
- 4 'Can you speak more slowly? I can't understand', he said to me.
He asked because
- 5 'Don't come before 6 o'clock', I said to him.
I told