

Reported Speech

Introduction to Reported Speech



Reported speech or **indirect speech** is the second-hand account of what has been spoken by someone else (**direct speech**). In the above example, Amit's friend reports what their teacher had said in the classroom.

Inverted commas ("...") are used for indicating direct speech, i.e., for showing the exact words spoken by the speaker.

For example:

Teacher: "I will give a test on reported speech tomorrow."

There are *two ways of reporting* this direct speech.

I. Direct reported speech: By using the exact words of the speaker.

The teacher said, “I will give a test on reported speech tomorrow.”

As you would have noticed, there is *not much difference between direct speech and direct reported speech*. Both make use of the inverted commas, thereby indicating that the exact words of the speaker have been used.

However, *the use of the reporting verb* (‘said’ in this case) in the latter differentiates it from the former.

II. Indirect reported speech: By using one’s own words to replace the exact words of the speaker.

The teacher said she would give a test on reported speech today.

[Remember: Basically, **speech is either direct or indirect**. Direct speech makes use of inverted commas, whereas indirect speech does not.]

Reported Statements



Notice that the statement made by the elephant is in ***simple present tense*** and the deer also reports his statement in simple present tense. Therefore, there is ***no shift in tenses*** from the direct statement to the reported statement.

However, there is a *shift in tenses when the direct statement is not in simple present tense*. Notice in the following example that there is a shift in tenses from the statement made by the elephant (simple past tense) to the statement reported by the deer (past perfect tense).



Reported Commands



In the above example, an affirmative command (Go, **play**...) is reported. Notice that in the reported speech, the commanding verb is preceded by **told me to**.

However, in cases of negative commands, the commanding verb in the reported speech is preceded by **told me not to**, as in the following example.



Reported Questions

You know that there are two types of questions: the YES/NO type and the WH- type. Let us see what happens when such questions are reported.

YES/NO type



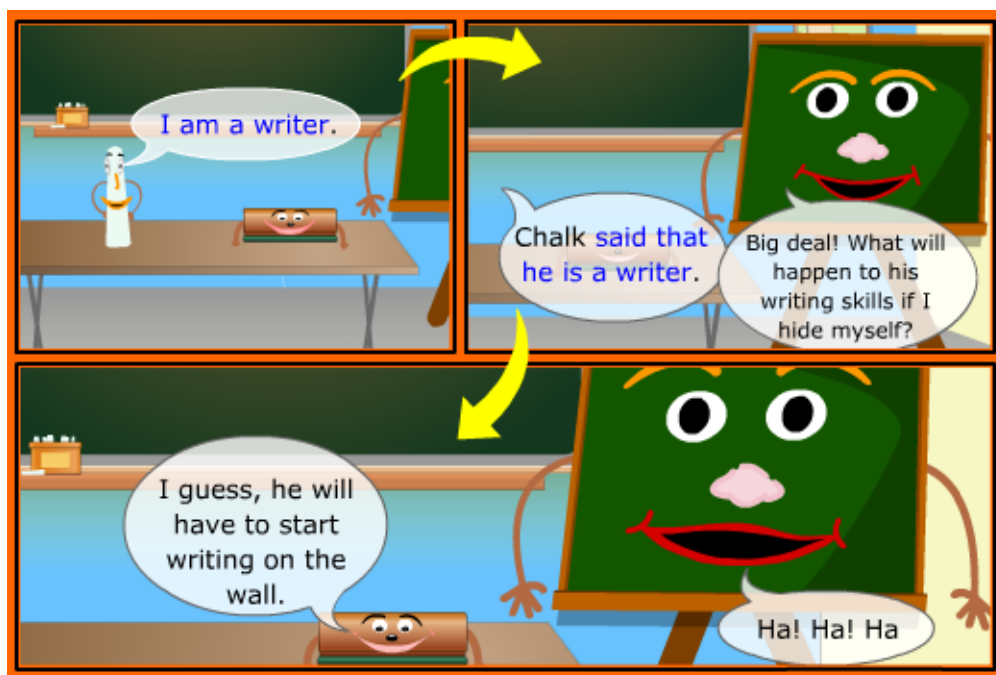
Remember: You can use *if* or *whether* in the reported speech of Yes/No type questions.

WH- type



Remember: A reported speech does not have a question mark. The question becomes a statement.

Conversion of Tenses



You can see that there is no shift in tenses in the above example. Why? This is because, as mentioned earlier, **if the direct speech is in the simple present, then there is no shift in tenses** in the reported speech.

However, **if the direct speech indicates the past, then there is a shift in tenses** in the reported speech.

This is why conversion of tenses is an important part of the conversion of direct speech into reported speech. Let us look at some more examples of such changes.

Simple past	Changes to	Past perfect	Sameer: "I went to the market." Sameer said that he had gone to the market.
Present perfect			Jennifer: "I have begun writing the book." Jennifer said that she had begun writing the book.
Past perfect			Deepak: "I had already started watching the movie when Sam entered the room." Deepak said that he had already started watching the movie when Sam entered the room.
Was/were	Changes to	Had been	Tina: "I was working in the laboratory." Tina said that she had been working in the laboratory.
Has been			Billu: "Pintu has been sleeping since morning." Billu said that Pintu had been sleeping since morning.

Had been			Wasim: "I had been singing all afternoon." Wasim said that he had been singing all afternoon.
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Am, Are, Is change to Was/Were



In the above example, **am** changes to **was**. Similarly, when **are** and **is** are used in direct speech, they change to **were** and **was** respectively in the reported speech.

Will changes to Would

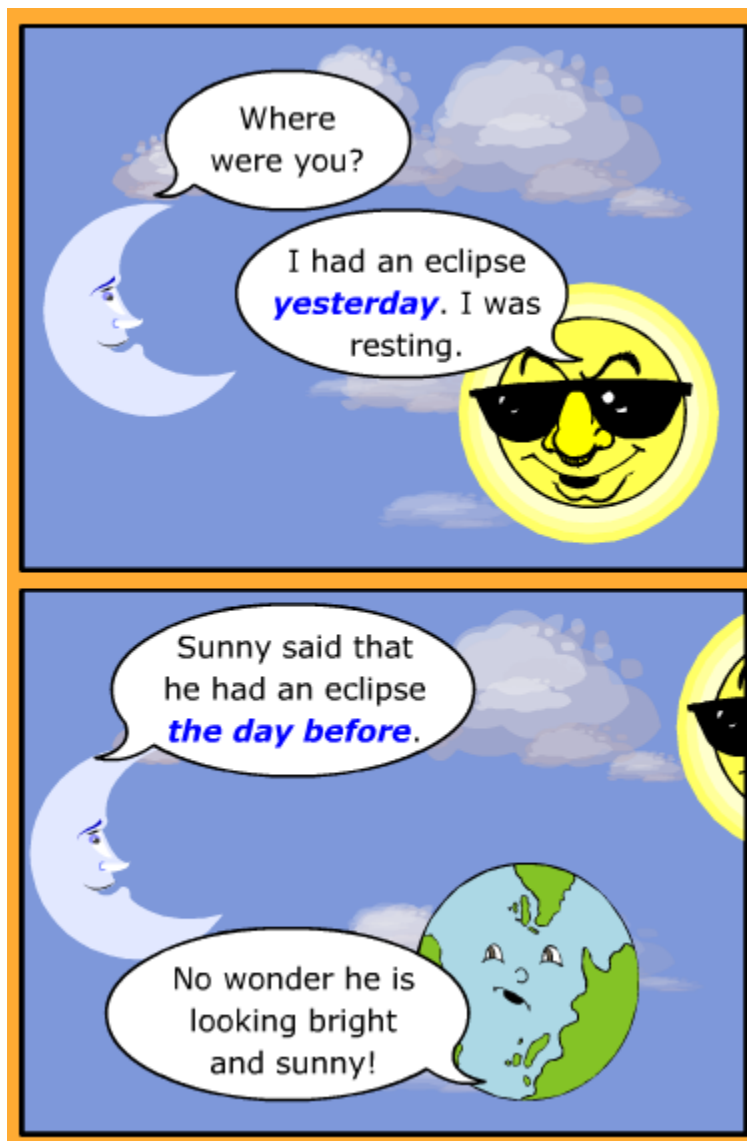
Roger: "We ***will*** be back after nine."

Roger said that they ***would*** be back by nine.

Changes in the Expressions of Time

Yesterday changes to The day before

The following example will make this clear.



Here are two more cases in which the expression of time changes in the reported speech.

Tomorrow changes to The day after

Julie: "We will work on the History project ***tomorrow***."

Julie said that they would work on the History project ***the day after***.

Today changes to That day

Ananya: "I have to visit my grandfather ***today***."

Ananya said that she had to visit her grandfather ***that day***.