

DIRECT AND INDIRECT SPEECHES

A. Look at the following sentences:

(a) Ranjan says to his friend, "I have a headache. I am unable to attend my class."

(b) The clerk says to me, "You will have to pay the late fine."

When Ranjan's friend has to report to the class teacher, he says:

Ranjan says that he has a headache and is unable to attend his class.

Similarly, I report to my father:

The clerk tells me that I will have to pay the late fine.

In these examples first, we put what **Ranjan** and **the clerk** say within inverted commas. This is called **Direct Speech**. But when we report the same thing in our own words without changing the meaning, it is called **Indirect Speech**. The inverted commas are often replaced by an appropriate conjunction. The Verb in the Reporting clause is also changed suitably.

Rules of changing the Direct Speech to Indirect Speech

There are certain rules of changing Direct speech to Indirect Speech. They are as follows :

1. Inverted commas are omitted and a suitable conjunction is used between Reporting Clause and Reported Speech depending on the kind of sentence used as Reported Speech

Sentence as Reported speech	conjunction to be used
Assertive/Declarative/ Statement	that
Question/ Interrogative	
Yes/No	if/ whether
Wh-question	wh-word
Imperative	to
Exclamatory	that

2. While changing Direct Speech into Indirect Speech, we change Reporting verb keeping in mind the kind of sentence used as the reported speech. Thus,

Reported Speech	Rep. verb in Dir. Speech	Rep. verb in Indir. Speech
Statement	say, tell	say, tell
Question	say, ask	ask, inquire, want to know
Command /request advise	say, ask	order, request, command, etc (any suitable verb)

3. If the reporter uses the present or future tense, the tense of what he says – i.e., reported speech – will not change.

Now consider the following sentences:

(a) The servant said, "There is no snake."

(b) The old man says, "I have seen a snake under the staircase."

When we have to report the same thing in the indirect form we say:

The servant said that there was no snake.

Here the reporting verb 'said' is in the Past tense. Therefore, the tense of the Reported Speech is changed into the Past tense.

The second sentence in the **Indirect Speech** will be:

The old man says that he has seen a snake under the staircase.

This is because the reporting verb - here 'says' - is in the Present Tense.

Therefore, the tense of the reported speech has not changed.

Thus the rule is that if the reporting verb is in the Present or Future Tense, the tense of the Reported Speech is not changed. But if the reporting verb is in the Past Tense, the tense of the Reported Speech is changed as follows :

a. Present Indefinite or Simple Present - Past Indefinite or Simple Past

Examples:

Direct: Gayatri said, "I like music."

Indirect: Gayatri said that she liked music.

Direct : I said to her, "I go there every day."

Indirect : I told her that I went there everyday.

b. Past Indefinite or (Simple Past) – Past Perfect Tense

Direct: Babu said to his friend, "I saw Gol Ghar last Friday."

• **Indirect:** Babu told his friend that he had seen GolGhar the previous Friday."

c. Present Continuous or Present Progressive - Past Continuous or Past Progressive

Examples:

Direct: They said, "Our college is going on an excursion."

Indirect: They said that their college was going on an excursion.

Direct: My friend said to me, "He is preparing his speech."

Indirect: My friend told me that he was preparing his speech.

d. Present Perfect and Past Perfect - Past Perfect Tense

Direct: The rickshaw puller said, "The government has done very little for us."

Indirect: The rickshaw puller said that the government had done very little for them.

Direct: The teacher said to the students, "By 1947 India had become independent."

Indirect: The teacher told the students that India had become independent by 1947.

e. Present Perfect Continuous and Past Perfect Continuous - Past Perfect Continuous Tense

Direct: The captain said, "Our players have been playing for weeks."

Indirect: The captain said that their players had been playing for weeks.

Direct: Zafar said, "I had enjoyed the party."

Indirect: Zafar said that he had enjoyed the party.

f. Modals denoting future time are changed into corresponding Past Tense; i.e.

shall - should

will - would

may - might

can - could

Note: However, if the reported statement/ situation is valid at the time of reporting, the tense of the Reported Speech is not changed. For example, Bipin said to me, "I **don't** smoke."

If the statement means that he does not smoke ever now, there is no need to change the tense. Hence,

Bipin told me that he **doesn't** smoke.

But,

Bipin said to me when I met him last Christmas, "I **don't** smoke."

Here, it is not clear whether he smokes now or not. Therefore,

Bipin told me last Christmas that he **didn't** smoke.

Exercise - 1

Change the following sentences into Indirect Speech:

1. Mummy said to me, "I need some cough syrup."
2. The artist said, "We are already booked."
3. His father said to Amar, "You have broken my spectacles."
4. They said, "We are going to Rajgir on New Year's Day."
5. The singer said, "I liked the audience very much."
6. Chabbi said to the organiser, "I will come again."
7. The salesman said, "My stock has run short."
8. He further said, "I had already placed orders for more goods."
9. Mamta said, "I will be doing something for the poor."
10. I said to him, "They will have gone before you reach here."

4. Universal Truth

In the case of a universal truth or a habitual fact the, tense of the reported speech is not changed. For example,

1. The teacher said, "The earth **moves** round the sun."
The teacher said that the earth **moves** round the sun.
2. The preacher said, "Honesty **is** the best policy."
The preacher said that honesty **is** the best policy.
3. They said, "Nobody **can** be ever happy in life."
They said that nobody **can** be ever happy in life.
4. The child said, "Two and two **makes** four."
The child said two and two **makes** four.

5. Changing the person of the Pronoun:

The person of the pronoun in the Reported speech changes as follows :

1st Person in the Reported speech — According to the Subject of the Reporting clause.

2nd Person in the Reported speech — According to the Object of the Reporting clause.

3rd person in the Reported speech — No change

Thus,

1. The gardener said, "I have to work for ten years."
The **gardener** said that **he** had to work for ten years.
2. Varsha said to me, "You have done the right thing."
Varsha told **me** that I had done the right thing
3. Amod said, "My brother is a good cricketer."
Amod said that **his** brother was a good cricketer.

6. Changing some other parts of speech like Adjectives, Adverbs etc. in the Reported Speech

Time adverbs showing nearness are changed into Time adverbs showing distance. Thus,

Direct speech

Indirect Speech

this	that
these	those
now	then /at the time
here	there
today	that day
tonight	that night
yesterday	the day before/ the previous day
tomorrow	the following day/ the next day
the day before yesterday	two days before
the day after tomorrow	in two days' time
the last week	the week before/ the previous week
so	thus

(a) My friend said to me, "I will meet my brother **tomorrow**."

My friend told me that he would meet his brother the following day.

(b) She said to me, "I met him **last week**."

She told me that she had met him **the week before**.

Exercise-2

Change the following into Indirect speech

1. Grandma said, "I don't like summer."
2. My friend said to me, "You never feel tired."
3. The child said to his papa, "I must get free time to play."
4. The grocer said, "Prices will never come down."
5. They said, "We are opening a cyber café."

B. Questions

There are two types of questions:

Yes/no questions, i.e. questions beginning with an Auxiliary Verb like **is, am, are, do, does, have, has, etc.**

Wh-questions, i.e., questions beginning with an Interrogative word like **what, who, when, why, where, which, how** etc.

Read the following sentences:

1. I said to Moti, "When will the college reopen?"
2. Pragya said to me, "Why do you ask me?"
3. The newcomer said, "Which way is the college canteen?"
4. The guests said, "Where are the toilets?"

5. They said to me, "Are you the son of a minister?"
6. I said to a senior student, "How shall I prepare for the exam?"
7. People often ask, "Has politics become dirty now?"

Some of the above questions begin with **why, which, where**, and **how** and some with **has** and **are**. While changing them into indirect speech **said** or **told** is replaced by **asked, inquired (of)** or **wanted to know (of)**. In case of a question beginning with an auxiliary verb such as **is, are, has, have, do, does** etc, we use **if** or **whether** as conjunction between Reporting Clause and Reported Speech. Again, the interrogative structure is made assertive and full stop is used in place of a question mark. Thus the above sentences can be changed into Indirect speech as follows:

1. I asked Moti when the college would reopen.
2. Pragya inquired of me why I asked her.
3. The newcomer asked which way the college canteen was.
4. The guests asked where the toilets are/were.
5. They asked me whether I am the son of a minister.
6. I asked a senior student how I should prepare for the exam.
7. People often ask whether politics has become dirty now.

In examples 4 and 5 tense need not be changed as the questions refer to the time which is present. The same is the case with **now** in example 7.

C. Requests, commands, proposals, offers, advice etc.

While reporting requests, commands, proposals, offers and advice etc; 'said' of the direct speech is replaced by words expressing similar meaning. The imperative mood is also changed into the infinite.

Examples,

1. The policeman said to me, "Show me your license."
The policeman asked me to show him my license.
2. The magistrate said to the protesters, "Go away from here."
The magistrate ordered the protesters to go away from there.
3. My friends said, "Let us go to the Grand Hotel."
My friends suggested that we (should) go to the Grand Hotel.
4. The doctor said to me, "Take exercise regularly."
The doctor advised me to take exercise regularly.
5. I said to my friends, "Let's go to Kumharar for a picnic."
I proposed to my friends that we should go Kumharar for a picnic.
6. The old man said to me, "Please hold my bag."
The old man requested me to hold his bag.

Exercise - 3

Change the following sentences into Indirect speech:

1. Sumitra said to me, "Take a morning walk to stay fit."
2. Sheela said to Rani, "Let's go to Naina Beauty Parlour."
3. You said to Karim, "Eating gutkha is bad for health."
4. The judge said, "Call the next witness."
5. Mother said to me, "Don't forget to buy vegetables."
6. The salesman said to me, "I can give you 50% discount."
7. The minister said to the public, "I'll fulfil all your demands."

C. Exclamations and Wishes

While reporting exclamations and wishes, 'said/ told' is replaced by some verb expressing exclamation or wish like exclaim, cry out, shout, wish, bless, curse, pray, etc.

Examples,

1. Grandpa said to me, "May you live long!"
Grandpa wished me a long life. / wished that I might live long.
2. The broker said, "Alas! I am undone!"
The broker exclaimed with sorrow that he was undone.
3. They all said to me, "Happy birthday to you!"
They all wished me a happy birthday.
4. The priest said to Maya, "May God give you a son!"
The priest blessed Maya that God might give her a son!"
5. The angry man said to Pappu, "Go to hell!"
The angry man cursed Pappu that he might go to hell.

Exercise - 4

Change the following sentences into Indirect speech:

1. The teacher said to me, "God bless you!"
2. The child said me, "What a beautiful flower!"
3. I said to my friend, "Good bye!"
4. My mother said to me, "Bravo! You've got first!"
5. Natalia said, "What a pity! He lost his eyesight!"