

Direct and Indirect Speech

There are two ways to convey a message of a person, or the words spoken by a person to another person.

1. Direct speech
2. Indirect speech

Suppose your friend whose name is John tells you in school, "I will give you a pen". You come to home and you want to tell your brother what your friend told you. There are two ways to tell him.

We may report the words of a speaker in two ways:

- i) We may quote his actual words. This is called **Direct Speech**.
- ii) We may report what he said without quoting his exact words. This is called **Indirect (or Reported) Speech**.

Direct: Rama said, "I am very busy now."

Indirect: Rama said that he was very busy then.

It will be noticed that in Direct Speech, we use inverted commas to mark off the exact words of the speaker. In Indirect Speech we do not.

It will be further noticed that in changing the above Direct Speech into Indirect certain changes have been made.

Thus,

- i) We have used the conjunction 'that' before the Indirect statement.
- ii) The pronoun 'I' is changed to 'he'. (The Pronoun is changed in Person.)
- iii) The verb 'am' is changed to 'was'. (Present Tense is changed to Past.)
- iv) The adverb 'now' is changed to 'then'.

Rules for changing Direct Speech into Indirect:

When the reporting or principal verb is in the Past Tense, all Present tenses of the Direct are changed into the corresponding Past Tenses.

Thus:

- a) A simple present becomes a simple past.

Direct: He said, "I am unwell."

Indirect: He said (that) he was unwell.

b) A present continuous becomes a past continuous.

Direct: He said, "My master is writing letters."

Indirect: He said (that) his master was writing letters,

c) A present perfect becomes a past perfect.

Direct: He said, "I have passed the examination."

Indirect: He said (that) he had passed the examination.

Note: The 'shall' of the Future Tense is changed into should. The 'will' of the Future Tense is changed into would or should.

As a rule, the simple past in the Direct becomes the past perfect in the Indirect.

Direct: He said, "The horse died in the night."

Indirect: He said that the horse had died in the night.

If the reporting verb is in the Present Tense, the tenses of the Direct Speech do not change. For example, we may rewrite the above examples, putting the reporting verb in the Present Tense, thus:

- He says he is unwell.
- He has just said his master is writing letters.
- He says he has passed the examination.
- He says the horse died in the night.

The pronouns of the Direct Speech are changed, where necessary, so that their relations with the reporter and his hearer, rather than with the original speaker, are indicated. To be a little clearer, the change of pronouns can be explained like this. The pronouns of the first person are changed to the pronouns of the same person as the subject of the reporting verb.

She said, "I am busy" (Direct)

She said that she was busy (Indirect)

I said, "I am busy" (Direct)

I said that I was busy (Indirect)

You said, "I am busy" (Direct)

You said that you were busy (Indirect)

He said, "I am busy" (Direct)

He said that he was busy (Indirect)

They said, "We are busy" (Direct)

They said that they were busy (Indirect)

We said, "We are busy" (Direct)

We said that we were busy (Indirect)

The pronouns of second person are changed to the pronouns of the same person as the object of the reporting verb.

Observe the following examples:

Direct : He said to **me**, "I don't believe you."

Indirect : He told me that he didn't believe **me**

Direct : She said to **him**, "I don't believe you."

Indirect : She told him that she didn't believe **him**

Direct : I said to **him**, "I don't believe you."

Indirect : I told him that I didn't believe **him**.

Direct : I said to **you**, "I don't believe you."

Indirect : I told you that I didn't believe **you**.

Words expressing nearness in time or place are generally changed into words expressing distance.

Thus:

Now becomes then

to-day becomes that day

Here becomes there

to-morrow becomes the next day

Ago becomes before

yesterday becomes the day before

Thus becomes so

last night becomes the night before

Direct: He said, "I am glad to be here this evening."

Indirect: He said that he was glad to be there that evening.

The changes do not occur if the speech is reported during the same period or at the same place;

Ex: Direct: He says, "I am glad to be here this evening."

Indirect: He says he is glad to be here this evening.

Similarly, **this** and **these** are changed to **that** and **those** unless the thing pointed out is near at hand at the time of reporting the speech.

Questions:

In reporting questions, the Indirect Speech is introduced by some such verbs as asked, inquired, wanted to know, interrogated etc.

When the question is not introduced by an interrogative word, the reporting verb is followed by **whether** or **if**.

- Direct : He said to me, "What are you doing?"
Indirect : He asked me what I was doing.
Direct : "Where do you live?" asked the stranger.
Indirect : The stranger enquired where I live.
Direct : The policeman said to us, "Where are you going?"
Indirect : The policeman enquired where we were going.
Direct : He said, "Will you listen to such a man?"
Indirect : He asked them/me whether they/I would listen to such a man.
Direct : "Do you suppose you know better than your own father?"
Jeered his angry mother.
Indirect : His angry mother jeered and asked whether he supposed that he knew better than his own father.

Commands and Requests:

In reporting commands and requests, the Indirect speech is introduced by some verb expressing command or request, and the Imperative mood is changed into the Infinitive.

- Direct : Rama said to Arjun, "Go away,"
Indirect : Rama ordered Arjun to go away.
Direct : He said to him, "Please wait here till I return."
Indirect : He requested him to wait there till he returned.
Direct : "Call the first witness." said the judge,
Indirect : The judge commanded them to call the first witness.
Direct : He shouted, "Let me go."
Indirect : He shouted to them to let him go.
Direct : He said, "Be quiet and listen to my words."
Indirect : He urged them to be quiet and listen to his words.

Exclamations and Wishes

In reporting exclamations and wishes the Indirect Speech is introduced by some verb expressing exclamation or wish.

- Direct. He said, "Alas! I am undone,"
Indirect. He exclaimed sadly that he was undone.

- Direct : Alice said, "How clever I am!"
Indirect : Alice exclaimed that she was very clever.
Direct : He said, "Bravo! You have done well."
Indirect : He applauded him, saying that he had done well.
Direct : "So help me Heaven!" he cried, "I will never steal again."
Indirect : He called upon Heaven to witness his resolve never to steal again.

Change the following into direct speech or indirect speech

I.

- 1) He said, "The earth moves round the sun".
- 2) They said, "A bad carpenter quarrels with his tools".
- 3) The teacher said, "The sun rises in the east".
- 4) The boys said, "Oil floats on water".
- 5) She said, "A bird in hand is worth two in the bush".

II.

- 1) She said, "I am very poor".
- 2) He said, "We are in the playground".
- 3) Mohit said, "I don't believe you".
- 4) John said to Mary, "You are innocent".
- 5) My father said to me, "They are late".

III.

- 1) She said, "It may rain".
- 2) The boy said, "I can do it".
- 3) He said to me, "I shall meet your father".
- 4) Joseph said, "I will go home soon".
- 5) She said, "I can't agree with you".
- 6) Raman said, "I have a problem".
- 7) The officer said to the clerk, "You must do it".
- 8) Balu said, "I don't drink coffee".
- 9) Geeta said, "Rajashree will not lie".
- 10) Vidya said, "Sachin has a car".

IV.

- 1) The boy said, "I am doing my homework".
- 2) Ravi said, "I have met your brother".

- 3) Seetha said, "I waited for Ramu till 10 o' clock".
- 4) Rahim said, "John will have met the governor".
- 5) He said, "It is time I went to bed".
- 6) Radha said, "I was watching T.V."
- 7) He said, "I have bought a watch for you".
- 8) Sunita said, "I have been working on this novel for five years".
- 9) My father said to me, "You have done your work well".
- 10) Mohan said to me, "I met Suresh in Mumbai".
- 11) Abhinav said, "I have not stolen the necklace".
- 12) The villager said to the stranger, "I have never seen you".
- 13) Srinivas said, "I am reading a novel".
- 14) Shahid said, "My father went to Guntur yesterday".
- 15) He said, "The children are having a bath now".

V

- 1) He said to me, "Who lives in this house"?
- 2) "Do you know when she will go home?" I said to him.
- 3) Ramesh said to me, "How are you feeling?"
- 4) She said, "Can you help me?"
- 5) I said to him, "What are you doing here today?"
- 6) My friend said, "Is Mr. Rao on leave?"
- 7) Sumitra said, "Shall I switch on the fan?"
- 8) She said, "Why didn't he come?"
- 9) Nirmala said to her friend, "Which magazines do you usually read?"
- 10) He said, "Will you listen to such a man?"

VI

- 1) Rama said to Arjun, "Go away".
- 2) He said to him, "Please wait here till I return".
- 3) "Call the first witness", said the Judge.
- 4) "Open fire", the officer said to the soldiers.
- 5) My friend said, "Let's sing together".
- 6) Mary's father said to the Principal, "Please pardon my daughter".
- 7) They said to us, "Grow more trees".
- 8) The doctor said, "You must exercise every day".
- 9) He said, "Sit down".
- 10) The manager said to the clerk, "Don't come late".

VII

- 1) "May you live long", she said.
- 2) He said, "How beautiful the garden is!"
- 3) He said, "Alas! I am undone".
- 4) "Many happy returns of the day", said Mohsin.
- 5) Harsha said to Susheela, "Good Morning".
- 6) He said, "Bravo! You have been well".
- 7) She said, "My God! I am ruined".
- 8) He said, "May your daughter recover soon".
- 9) "So help me, Heaven!" he cried, "I will never steal again".
- 10) Alice said, "How clever I am!"

Answer

I.

- 1) He said that the earth moves round the sun.
- 2) They said that a bad carpenter quarrels with his tools.
- 3) The teacher said that the sun rises in the east.
- 4) The boys said that oil floats on water.
- 5) She said that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush.

II.

- 1) She said that she was very poor.
- 2) He said that they were in the playground.
- 3) Mohit said that he didn't believe me.
- 4) John told Mary that she was innocent.
- 5) My father told me that they were late.

III.

- 1) She said that it might rain.
- 2) The boy said that he could do it.
- 3) He told me that he would meet my father.
- 4) Joseph said that he would go home soon.
- 5) She said that she couldn't agree with me.
- 6) Raman said that he had a problem.
- 7) The officer told the clerk that he had to do it.
- 8) Balu said that he didn't drink coffee.
- 9) Geeta said that Rajashree would not lie.

- 10) Vidya said that Sachin had a car.

IV.

- 1) The boy said that he was doing his homework.
- 2) Ravi said that he had met my brother.
- 3) Seetha said that she had waited for Ramu till 10 o' clock.
- 4) Rahim said that John would have met the governor.
- 5) He said that it was time he went to bed.
- 6) Radha said that she had been watching T.V.
- 7) He said that he had bought a watch for me.
- 8) Sunita said that she had been working on that novel for five years.
- 9) My father told me that I had done my work well.
- 10) Mohan told me that he had met Suresh in Mumbai.
- 11) Abhinav said that he had not stolen the necklace.
- 12) The villager told the stranger that he had never seen him.
- 13) Srinivas said that he was reading a novel.
- 14) Shahid said that his father had gone to Guntur the previous day.
- 15) He said that the children were having a bath then.

V.

- 1) He asked me who lived in that house.
- 2) I asked him if he knew when she would go home.
- 3) Ramesh asked me how I was feeling.
- 4) She asked me if I could help her.
- 5) I asked him what he was doing there that day.
- 6) My friend asked if Mr. Rao was on leave.
- 7) Sumitra asked whether she should switch on the fan.
- 8) She wondered why he didn't come.
- 9) Nirmala asked her friend which magazines she usually read.
- 10) He asked them whether they would listen to such a man.

VI.

- 1) Rama ordered Arjun to go away.
- 2) He requested him to wait there till he returned.
- 3) The Judge commanded/ordered them to call the first witness.
- 4) The officer ordered/commanded the soldiers to open fire.
- 5) My friend suggested/proposed that we should sing together.

- 6) Mary's father requested/begged the Principal to pardon his daughter.
- 7) They urged us to grow more trees.
- 8) The doctor advised me to exercise every day.
- 9) He asked me to sit down.
- 10) The manager advised/warned the clerk not to come late.

VII.

- 1) She wished/prayed that I might live long.
- 2) He exclaimed that the garden was very beautiful.
- 3) He exclaimed sadly that he was undone.
- 4) Mohsin wished him/her many happy returns of the day.
- 5) Harsha wished Susheela good morning.
- 6) He applauded him, saying that he had done well.
- 7) She exclaimed bitterly that she was ruined.
- 8) He prayed/hoped that my daughter might recover soon.
- 9) He called upon Heaven to witness his resolution to never steal again.
- 10) Alice exclaimed that she was very clever.