by Valencia
JUST IN ENGLISH

Reported Speech

Unit 8A · Sell and Tell — Intermedio 2

What is reported speech?

We use **reported speech** to tell another person what somebody said. The exact words are **direct speech**; when we report them later, the tenses, pronouns and time words usually move one step back — this is called **backshift**.

Direct: Ana: "I like shopping."

*Reported: Ana **said that she liked** shopping.*

Direct: Bryan: "I am going to buy a new car."

*Reported: He **told me that he was going to buy** a new car.*

The backshift table — learn this by heart

Direct speech	Reported speech	Example
Present simple	Past simple	"I like shopping." → She said she **liked** shopping.
Present continuous	Past continuous	"I'm buying a gift." → He said he **was buying** a gift.
am / is / are going to	was / were going to	"I'm going to complain." → She said she **was going to complain**.
Present perfect	Past perfect	"I've forgotten my keys." → She said she **had forgotten** her keys.
Past simple	Past perfect	"I lost my wallet." → He told me he **had lost** his wallet.
will	would	"I'll always love you." → He told her he **would** always love her.
can	could	"I can't speak Italian." → Ana said she **couldn't** speak Italian.
may	might	"I may be late." → She said she **might** be late.
must	had to	"I must go." → She said she **had to** go.
could / might / would / should	don't change	"You should rest." → He said I **should** rest.

say or tell?

say — never put a person right after *say*: *He **said** (that) he was tired.* (Not: *He said me…*)

tell — you **must** put a person after *tell*: *He **told me** (that) he was tired.* (Not: *He told that he…*)

Using **that** after *said* and *told* is optional: both versions are correct.

The other changes: pronouns and time words

The person who speaks changes, so the pronouns change too: "**I** like jazz," Jane said → Jane said that **she** liked jazz. And if you report on a different day or in a different place, the time and place words change as well:

In the original words	When you report later
today	**that day**
tonight	**that night**
tomorrow	**the next day**
yesterday	**the day before**
now	**then**
here	**there**
this	**that**
these	**those**
last week	**the week before**
next week	**the following week**
ago	**before**

*"I'll meet you **here tomorrow**." → He said he'd meet me **there the next day**.*

*"We bought the tickets **yesterday**." → They told us they had bought the tickets **the day before**.*

When the tenses DON'T change

If you report something **very soon after** the person said it — or it is still true now — the tenses often stay the same:

*Adam (just now): "I can't come tonight." → I've just spoken to Adam and he said that he **can't** come tonight.*

*Jack: "I really enjoyed my trip." → Jack told me that he really **enjoyed** his trip.*

From today's class — the Ana & Bryan practice

• "I am buying something for my girlfriend." → He said that he **was buying** something for **his** girlfriend.

• "I can't speak Italian." → Ana said that she **couldn't** speak Italian.

• "I lost my wallet." → He told me that he **had lost** his wallet.

• "I have forgotten my keys." → She told her friend that she **had forgotten** her keys.

• "I may be late because I am really busy." → She said that she **might** be late because she **was** really busy.

• "I love you and I will always be with you." → He told her that he **loved** her and that he **would** always be with her.

Memory hook: reporting is like moving a photo one frame back in time — the people (pronouns), the moment (tenses) and the place (here → there) all shift together.

Reported questions

Questions change too. The tenses backshift in the same way, but there are two extra rules: the word order becomes **subject + verb** (like a statement), and we **don't use do / did**. A reported question ends with a **period**, not a question mark.

Yes / No questions → use IF or WHETHER

- "Are you married?" → She asked him **if** he **was** married.
- "Did she call?" → He asked me **whether** she **had called**.
- "Do you want a drink?" → He asked me **if** I **wanted** a drink.
- "Have you finished?" → She asked me **if** I **had finished**.

Wh- questions → keep the question word

- "What's your name?" → I asked him **what** his name **was**.
- "Where do you live?" → He asked me **where** I **lived**.
- "Where did you buy it?" → She asked me **where** I **had bought** it.
- "What time does the store close?" → I asked him **what time** the store **closed**.

The formula

asked + person + if / whether (yes-no) or **question word** (wh-) **+ subject + verb in the backshifted tense**. No *do*, no *did*, no question mark, no question word order.

Common mistakes — don't do this

- **Wrong:** *He said me that he was tired.* → **Right:** *He **said** (that) he was tired / He **told me**…*
- **Wrong:** *Sarah told that she would call.* → **Right:** *Sarah **told Cally** that she would call.*
- **Wrong:** *She asked me where did I live.* → **Right:** *She asked me where I **lived**.*
- **Wrong:** *He asked me if I am married?* → **Right:** *He asked me if I **was** married**.***
- **Wrong:** *They said they bought it tomorrow.* → **Right:** *…they had bought it **the day before**.*

Report the conversation (from today's class)

Sophia: "How's your new job going?"

David: "It's going really well. My manager trusts me."

→ Sophia **asked** David how his new job **was going**. David **said** (that) it **was going** really well and that his manager **trusted** him.

Lucas: "What are you doing this weekend?"

Mia: "I'm visiting my grandparents on Saturday. We're going to cook dinner together."

→ Lucas **asked** Mia what she **was doing** that weekend. Mia **said** (that) she **was visiting** her grandparents on Saturday and that they **were going to cook** dinner together.

Olivia: "How was your vacation?"

Ben: "It was fantastic! We stayed near the beach. The food was delicious."

→ Olivia **asked** Ben how his vacation **had been**. Ben **said** (that) it **had been** fantastic, that they **had stayed** near the beach and that the food **had been** delicious.

Practice — report it!

A. Report the sentences.

1. “I work in a bank.” → He said that he …

2. “I am working today.” → She told us she …

3. “I've been ill for a couple of weeks.” → He told me he …

4. “I was at the doctor all morning.” → She told me that she …

5. “I'll lend you the money.” → He told me …

6. “I can't help you tomorrow.” → Ana said that she …

7. “We bought the tickets yesterday.” → They told us that they …

8. “I may call you tonight.” → He said that he …

B. Report the questions.

1. “Do you like shopping?” → He asked me …

2. “Where did you buy it?” → She asked me …

3. “Have you seen my receipt?” → I asked him …

4. “When does the sale end?” → She asked me …

C. Report the conversation.

Emma: “Did you enjoy the concert last night?”

Ryan: “Yes! It was amazing. The band played all my favorite songs. I'll definitely go again.”

Write Ryan's answers as reported speech: *Emma asked Ryan … / Ryan said …*

More reporting verbs

Today's verbs were **said**, **told** and **asked**. These three also work with the same *that* structure — very useful in the world of Sell and Tell:

- **promise**: “I'll give you a refund.” → The assistant **promised** that he would give me a refund.
- **complain**: “The shoes are too small.” → She **complained** that the shoes were too small.
- **explain**: “The sale ends today.” → He **explained** that the sale ended that day.

Speak with reported speech

Useful frames for conversation — complete them with something real:

- “My best friend told me that …”
- “My teacher said that …”
- “Yesterday, someone asked me if …”
- “I asked my partner where …”

Si faltaste a clase

1. Estudia la tabla de cambios de tiempos (página 1) y la de palabras de tiempo (página 2).
2. Haz la práctica de esta página y revisa tus respuestas con la clave de abajo.
3. Escribe 3 cosas que alguien te haya dicho esta semana y repórtalas en inglés (ej. *My mom told me that…*).
4. Si algo no te queda claro, pregúntale a tu profesor al inicio de la siguiente clase.

Answer key — A: 1. worked in a bank. 2. was working that day. 3. had been ill for a couple of weeks. 4. had been at the doctor all morning. 5. (that) he would lend me the money. 6. couldn't help me the next day. 7. had bought the tickets the day before. 8. might call me that night. **B:** 1. if I liked shopping. 2. where I had bought it. 3. if I had seen his receipt. 4. when the sale ended.