

## SECTION 19 indirect speech

### ● grammar summary

When we tell people what somebody said or thought, we often use **indirect speech**.

**Tenses, here-and-now words** (like *this, here, today*) and **pronouns** (like *I, you*) may change in indirect speech. This is because the time, place and speaker may be different.

*'I really like it here.'*

*Bill said that he really liked it there.*

We often **leave out that**, especially after common verbs like *say* and *think*.

*Bill said he really liked it there.*

**Indirect questions** have a **different structure** from direct questions.

*'What is your phone number?'*

*He asked me what my phone number was.*

*'Do you like cherries?'*

*She asked me if I liked cherries.*

We can use **object + infinitive** (with *to*) after *ask* and *tell*.

*I asked him to make some coffee.*

*She told the children not to make a noise.*

### ● pre-test: which units do you need?

Try this small test. It will help you to decide which units you need. The answers are on page 284.

#### ① Correct (✓) or not (✗)?

► I said Peter where was he going. ✗

1 A man asked me where the post office was. ...

2 I said I'm really tired. ...

3 John asked how did I feel. ...

4 I asked somebody where was the station? ...

5 Can you say me what the time is? ...

6 Mary asked me to help her. ...

7 I didn't know if I was late. ...

8 I didn't know whether I was late. ...

9 I told Ann to not worry. ...

10 Jake told that he wanted a holiday. ...

11 Do you know where all those people work? ...

12 Joe phoned me on Sunday and said he went to a great party yesterday. ...

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me  
you were dead,

They brought me bitter news to hear  
and bitter tears to shed.

I wept, as I remembered how often you  
and I

Had tired the sun with talking and sent  
him down the sky.

(William Cory)

There are so many kinds of awful men—  
One can't avoid them all. She often said  
She'd never make the same mistake again:  
She always made a new mistake instead.

(Wendy Cope)

# tenses and pronouns *Bill said he was really happy.*



When we tell people what somebody said or thought, we often use **indirect speech**.  
**Tenses and pronouns** (*I, you* etc) **change** in indirect speech if the **time** and **speaker** are different.  
 For example, present tenses become **past**; *I* may become *he* or *she*; *my* may become *his* or *her*.

SOMEBODY SAID/THOUGHT

INDIRECT SPEECH

'I'm happy.'

Bill said that he was happy. (NOT ~~Bill said that I'm happy.~~)

'I have a problem.'

I thought that I had a problem. (NOT ~~I thought to have a problem.~~)

'She likes me.'

He knew that she liked him.

'My feet are cold.'

She said her feet were cold.

We often **leave out** *that*, especially after common verbs like *say, think*.

Bill said he was really happy. I thought it was a great party.

## 1 Put in the correct pronouns (*I* etc) or possessives (*my* etc).

- ▷ 'She likes me.' He knew she liked him.....
- 1 'I speak French.' He said ..... spoke French.
- 2 'I'm sorry.' She said ..... was sorry.
- 3 'Ann phoned me.' She said Ann had phoned .....
- 4 'We want our money.' They said ..... wanted ..... money.

We can use both *say* and *tell* in indirect speech. **Tell** must have a **personal object**: we **tell somebody something**. *Say* doesn't need a personal object: we **say something (to somebody)**.

She **told me** I was late. (NOT ~~She told I was late.~~)

They **told Ann** the wrong time. (NOT ~~They told the wrong time to Ann.~~)

She **said** I was late. (NOT ~~She said me I was late.~~)

I **said** nothing to the police. (NOT ~~I said the police nothing.~~)

## 2 Circle the correct answer.

- 1 I *said* / *told* the driver I wanted to stop.
- 2 My mother *said* / *told* there was a letter for me.
- 3 Everybody *said* / *told* I looked beautiful.
- 4 Why did you *say* / *tell* the lessons were expensive?
- 5 Eric *said* / *told* the waiter he couldn't pay.
- 6 I didn't *say* / *tell* Peter that I was going away.
- 7 Nobody *said* / *told* me that the shop was closed.
- 8 Ann *said* / *told* that she would wait at the bus stop.

## 3 Put the beginnings and ends together, and look at the use of tenses.

1 In 1896 Lord Kelvin said	A aeroplanes were impossible. 1
2 In 1937 Hitler's nephew Willi said	B he would never be a scientist. ...
3 When Columbus got to America he thought	C his uncle was not interested in war. ...
4 When Albert Einstein was 10, a teacher told him	D the sun went round the earth. ...
5 Hundreds of years ago, people believed	E he had reached India. ...

When we tell people what somebody **said in the past**, there is a **time difference**.  
(For example, somebody said something on Sunday, and I tell you about it on Monday.)  
Because of this, **tenses usually change as follows**:

DIRECT SPEECH ON SUNDAY	TENSE CHANGE	INDIRECT SPEECH ON MONDAY
The children are in Ireland. My TV isn't working.	AM/ARE/IS → WAS/WERE	Karen said her children were in Ireland. He said his TV wasn't working.
I have a meeting at 4.00. Sue has passed her exam.	HAVE/HAS → HAD	She said she had a meeting at 4.00. Sally told me Sue had passed her exam.
I will probably be late.	WILL → WOULD	I thought I would probably be late.
You can have three tickets.	CAN → COULD	The man said I could have three tickets.
It doesn't matter, Martin.	DO/DOES → DID	I told Martin it didn't matter.
The train leaves at 6.00. We all speak English.	SIMPLE PRESENT → SIMPLE PAST	The timetable said the train left at 6.00. She said they all spoke English.
I forgot my keys.	SIMPLE PAST → PAST PERFECT	He said he had forgotten his keys.

④ Rewrite the sentences in indirect speech, changing the tenses. Begin *He/She/They said ...*

- SALLY: 'I'm tired.' *She said (that) she was tired.*
- 1 ANN: 'My sister needs a car.' .....
- 2 BILL: 'I have to phone Andrew.' .....
- 3 MARY: 'Nobody wants to help me.' .....
- 4 HELEN: 'The radio doesn't work.' .....
- 5 JOHN: 'I will be in Paris in July.' .....
- 6 MIKE: 'I like the red sweater.' .....
- 7 DAVID: 'I can't swim.' .....
- 8 ALICE: 'My parents are travelling.' .....
- 9 MARIA: 'The lessons are very good.' .....
- 10 ERIC AND SUE: 'We haven't heard from Joe.' .....

⑤ Look at the picture to see what John thought when he was small. Write his thoughts in indirect speech.

*He thought animals could talk.*

.....

.....

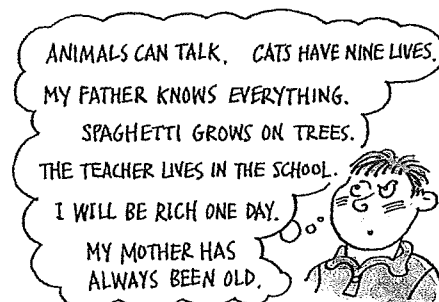
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⑥ What did you think when you were small? Write one or two sentences.

- 1 .....
- 2 .....

If somebody said something that is **still true** when it is reported, tenses don't always change.  
'My parents **don't** write to me.' → *She told me that her parents **didn't**/don't write to her.*

➔ For tenses after present reporting verbs (for example *She says that she's tired*) see page 249.

# indirect questions *She asked him what his name was.*

Indirect questions have a **different word order** from direct questions, and no question marks: XXX

DIRECT QUESTION: Monica said, 'Where is John?' I said, 'When can you come?'

INDIRECT QUESTION: Monica asked where John was. I asked when she could come.  
(NOT ~~Monica asked where was John?~~)

We **don't** use **do** in indirect questions.

DIRECT QUESTION: 'What do you want?' 'Where does Andrew live?'

INDIRECT QUESTION: She asked me what I wanted. I asked him where Andrew lived.  
(NOT ~~She asked me what did I want.~~)

## ① A policewoman stopped a driver in London and asked him some questions. Write the questions in indirect speech.

- ▷ 'What is your name?' ...*She asked him what his name was.*
- 1 'Where do you live?' .....
- 2 'Where do you work?' .....
- 3 'Where are you going?' .....
- 4 'Where have you been?' .....
- 5 'What is the number of your car?' .....
- 6 'Why are you driving on the right?' .....

With indirect **yes/no** questions we use **if** or **whether**. They mean the same.

DIRECT QUESTION: Do you know Tim? Are you French?  
INDIRECT QUESTION: He asked me if/whether I knew Tim. She asked if/whether I was French.

## ② The policewoman asked some more questions. Write them in indirect speech with **if** or **whether**.

- ▷ 'Are you British?' She asked him if ...*he was British.*
- 1 'Is it your car?' She asked him whether .....
- 2 'Do you have a driving licence?' .....
- 3 'Do you have it with you?' .....
- 4 'Do you always drive with the door open?' .....
- 5 'Are you listening to me?' .....

## ③ These are some of the questions from a woman's job interview. Write them in indirect speech.

- ▷ 'How old are you?' ...*They asked her how old she was.*
- 1 'Are you married?' .....
- 2 'Do you have children?' .....
- 3 'Where have you worked before?' .....
- 4 'Why do you want to change your job?' .....
- 5 'Can you speak any foreign languages?' .....
- 6 'What exams have you passed?' .....

## present reporting verbs *She says she comes from London.*

After present verbs (for example *she says, I think*) we **don't change** the tenses.

DIRECT SPEECH: 'Well, yes, I come from London.' 'Funny – she has a Scottish accent.'

INDIRECT SPEECH: *She says she comes from London, but I think she has a Scottish accent.*

### 1 Complete the indirect speech sentences.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| ▶ 'I'm Irish.'                   | He says <i>he's Irish.</i>               |
| ▶ 'Where is Peter?'              | She wants to know <i>where Peter is.</i> |
| ▶ 'Did John phone?'              | I don't know <i>if John phoned.</i>      |
| 1 'We live in Greece.'           | They say .....                           |
| 2 'I went to Belfast yesterday.' | She says .....                           |
| 3 'I've been ill.'               | He says .....                            |
| 4 'It's going to rain.'          | She thinks .....                         |
| 5 'I'll ask my sister.'          | She says .....                           |
| 6 'We're going to be rich.'      | They believe .....                       |
| 7 'Is lunch ready?'              | He wants to know .....                   |
| 8 'Where did I put my keys?'     | I don't remember .....                   |

We can ask questions politely by saying *Do you know ...?* or *Can you tell me ...?* + indirect question (see page 248).

*Where does she live?* → *Do you know where she lives?*

*Is he at home?* → *Can you tell me if he's at home?*

### 2 Rewrite the questions.

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| ▶ What does this word mean? | Do you know <i>what this word means?</i>          |
| ▶ Is there a lesson today?  | Can you tell me <i>if there's a lesson today?</i> |
| 1 Where can I buy tickets?  | Can you .....                                     |
| 2 How much does it cost?    | Do .....  |
| 3 Has John phoned?          | Can .....   |
| 4 Must I pay now?           | Can .....   |
| 5 Does Maria like steak?    | Can .....   |
| 6 Where did I park the car? | Do .....  |

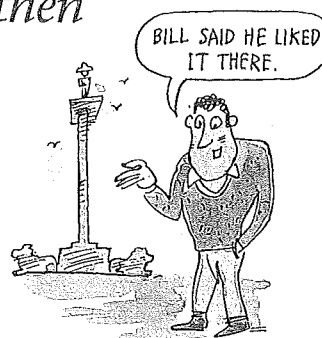
We can also use indirect questions in answers.

*Sorry, I don't know where she lives.*     *I can't remember if he's married.*

### 3 Don't give the answers! But write sentences beginning *I know, I don't know, I'd like to know, I don't want to know, I don't care* or *I can't remember*.

- ▶ Who built the Eiffel Tower? *I know who built the Eiffel Tower.*
- 1 What languages do Irish people speak? .....
- 2 What do elephants eat? .....
- 3 Does the British Museum open on Christmas Day? .....
- 4 Was King William II a tall man? .....
- 5 Do birds dream? .....

## here and now → there and then



When we tell people what somebody said, we may have to **change** words like *here*, *this*, *today* and *now*. This is because the **place and time have changed** since the words were spoken.

BILL IN IRELAND IN DECEMBER

JOE IN LONDON IN MARCH

*I like it here.*

*Bill said he liked it there / in Ireland.*

*I'm going fishing this week.*

*He said he was going fishing that week.*

*I'm not working today.*

*He said he wasn't working that day.*

*What do you want to do now?*

*He asked what I wanted to do then/next.*

### 1 Match the direct and indirect speech expressions.

DIRECT SPEECH: 'here and now' words		INDIRECT SPEECH: 'there and then' words	
1 here	6 today	A that day ...	F the next day ...
2 now	7 tonight	B that night ...	G there <del>at</del>
3 this	8 last week	C that ...	H the week before ...
4 tomorrow	9 next week	D the day before ...	I then ...
5 yesterday		E the next week ...	

### 2 A friend of yours said these sentences a month ago in another country. Now you are telling somebody what she said.

Complete the sentences with the correct 'there and then' words.

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ▷ 'I'm not happy here.'             | She said she wasn't happy ... <i>there</i> ..... |
| 1 'I hate this place.'              | She said she hated .....                         |
| 2 'I left home last week.'          | She said she had left home .....                 |
| 3 'I wrote to my father yesterday.' | She said she had written to her father .....     |
| 4 'Are you leaving today?'          | She asked me if I was leaving .....              |
| 5 'Where will you be tonight?'      | She asked where I would be .....                 |
| 6 'I'll phone you tomorrow.'        | She said she would phone me .....                |

### 3 Another friend of yours said these sentences two weeks ago in another town. Now you are telling somebody what he said. Write the sentences with the correct tenses and 'here and now' words.

- ▷ 'I'm really happy here.' He said he *was really happy there* .....
- 1 'I love this place.' .....
- 2 'I saw a great film yesterday.' .....
- 3 'I'm going to another party tonight.' .....
- 4 'Do you want to play tennis tomorrow?' .....
- 5 'My girlfriend will be here next week.' .....

# infinitives *She told me to get out.*

We use *ask* or *tell* + object + infinitive (with *to*), to say what people want(ed) us to do.

DIRECT SPEECH	INDIRECT SPEECH
'Please close the door.'	<i>She asked me to close the door.</i>
'Could you phone Angela?'	<i>I asked John to phone Angela.</i>
'Get out!'	<i>She told me to get out.</i>
'Don't worry.'	<i>The doctor always tells her not to worry.</i>

## ① Write past indirect speech sentences.

▷ JOHN: Peter, could you close the window? (*ask*)

*John asked Peter to close the window.*

▷ THE TEACHER: Andrew, don't talk so loud. (*tell*)

*The teacher told Andrew not to talk so loud.*

1 ERIC: Sue, please give me your phone number. (*ask*)

2 THE BOSS: Joe, I'd like you to work late. (*tell*)

3 MARY: Sue, don't tell Karen about Bill. (*ask*)

4 MR SANDERS: Fred, please don't smoke in my car. (*ask*)

5 THE GENERAL: Colonel Walker, take 100 men and cross the river. (*tell*)

6 ANN: Mary, you mustn't study so hard. (*tell*)

## ② Joe left home for university. His family gave him lots of advice. Look at the picture and complete the sentences.

▷ His mother *told him to write* ..... every week.

▷ His grandmother *told him not to forget* ..... to brush his teeth.

1 His girlfriend told ..... every day.

2 His mother ..... clean.

3 His father ..... hard.

4 His sister ..... parties.

5 His brother ..... exercise.

6 His mother ..... every day.

7 His father ..... late.

8 His brother ..... with money.

9 His sister ..... for money.

10 His grandmother ..... properly.



We don't use object + infinitive after *say* or *suggest*.

*I told her to phone me. (BUT NOT ~~I said her to phone me.~~)*

*I suggested that he should take the train. OR I suggested taking the train.*

*(BUT NOT ~~I suggested him to take the train.~~)*

→ For other verbs with object + infinitive, see page 122.

1 Correct (✓) or not (✗)?

- 1 Shakespeare told his wife that you don't understand my work. ...
- 2 I don't know what does this word mean. ...
- 3 Please tell me what you want. ...
- 4 I asked what the time was. ...
- 5 Mary asked me where Bill lived? ...

2 Read the letter and then complete the text.

Dear all,

Sorry I haven't written for a few weeks. I've been too busy. I'm having a great time; I'm going to parties every night. I'm doing a bit of work too. We had an exam last week. I hope I'll get good marks.

I only have one shirt - I've lost the others. Mum, can you buy me six more? And I can't find my raincoat. Is it at home?

My room here isn't very nice - I'll have to look for a better one. And the food here in college isn't much good, so I'm living on hamburgers. I've spent nearly all my money. Dad, can you send some more?

Can you give me Aunt Ellen's address? And I haven't heard from Sarah. Where is she living? And does John want to come and spend two or three days down here with me?

That's all for now. Love to everybody.

Joe

In his letter Joe said he was sorry that he hadn't written for a few weeks. It was because he 1 too busy. He 2 his family that he 3 a great time, but he 4 some work too. He said he 5 an exam 6 week, and he hoped he 7 get good marks.

Joe 8 that he only 9 one shirt, because he 10 the others. He asked his mother 11 him six more. And he asked 12 his raincoat 13 at home.

His room 14 not very nice, he said, so he 15 have to look for a better one. And because of the bad college food he 16 on hamburgers.

He said he 17 nearly all his money, and asked his father 18 him some more.

Joe also asked his family 19 him his Aunt Ellen's address. And he 20 them that he 21 from Sarah, and asked 22 she 23.

At the end of the letter, Joe asked 24 John 25 to go and spend a few days with him.