

Reported speech (indirect speech)*Reported speech (indirekte Rede)*

Quoted speech (<i>direct speech</i>)	Reported speech (<i>indirect speech</i>)
Quoting word-for-word what someone has stated or asked is called “quoted speech” (<i>also “direct speech”</i>). In quoted speech, what a person utters has to appear within quotation marks (‘...’).	We use reported speech when we want to repeat the content of statements, questions or other utterances previously made by other people, without quoting them explicitly as is done in direct speech. In reported speech, we don't use quotation marks.

Backshift

We do not change the **tense** (*no backshift*) if the **introductory clause** is in a **present** tense. However, when we use reported speech, we usually tend to refer to a quotation uttered in the past. If so, that's when the introductory clause is in a past tense (*e. g. “he asked”*), we usually have to change the tense. This is called “**backshift**”.

We tend to not use backshift if the uttered statement is clearly **still true**.

Quoted speech (<i>direct speech</i>)	Reported speech (<i>indirect speech</i>)
present simple →	past simple
present perfect simple →	past perfect simple
present perfect continuous →	past perfect continuous
past simple →	past perfect
past continuous →	past perfect continuous
past perfect →	past perfect (<i>no change</i>)
past perfect continuous →	past perfect continuous (<i>no change</i>)

Modal verbs

Also modal verbs tend to change.

Quoted speech (<i>direct speech</i>)	Reported speech (<i>indirect speech</i>)
will →	would
can →	could
must →	had to
shall →	should
may →	might

The modal verbs *could, should, would, might, needn't, ought to, used to*, however, do **not change** usually.

Exercise

Complete the sentences in reported speech. Use past tense and pay attention to backshift.

a) Mr. Miller said, 'I can't come to the meeting on Saturday.'

Mr. Miller said (that) _____

b) Mary said, 'I'm feeling ill.'

Mary said (that) _____

c) Your brother said, 'I like chocolate.'

Your brother said (that) _____

d) Your uncle asked, 'May I leave?'

Your uncle asked if _____

e) My brother said, 'I'm going to learn to cook.'

My brother said (that) _____

f) He said, 'I'll learn English online tomorrow.'

He said (that) _____

g) My cousin said, 'I'm not enjoying my job very much recently.'

My cousin said (that) _____

h) My parents said, 'We'll phone you when we get back.'

My parents said (that) _____

i) Susan said, 'You don't know what Bob is doing.'

Susan said (that) _____

j) Mr. Smith asked, 'What shall we do next?'

Mr. Smith asked _____

k) She said, 'I'll tell dad I saw you.'

She said (that) _____

Answers

Lösungen

- a) Mr. Miller said (that) he couldn't come to the meeting on Saturday.
- b) Mary said (that) she was feeling ill.
- c) Your brother said (that) he liked chocolate.
- d) Your uncle asked if he might leave.
- e) My brother said (that) he was going to learn to cook.
- f) He said (that) he would/he'd learn English online tomorrow.
- g) My cousin said (that) he wasn't enjoying his job very much recently.
- h) My parents said (that) they'd/they would phone me when they got back.
- i) Susan said (that) you/I didn't know what Bob was doing.
- j) Mr. Smith asked what we/they should do next.
- k) She said (that) she would/she'd tell dad she had/she'd seen you/me.