

Indirect speech

We use indirect speech (or reported speech) to report the meaning of what was said, not the exact words. We put indirect speech in a noun clause beginning with *that* (1) or a *wh*-word (*what, where, when, etc.*) (2). In informal uses, we often omit *that*.

- 1 'It's a strange story.' → *They said (that) it was a strange story.*
- 2 'What do you think about the story?' → *The teacher asked us what we thought about the story.*

Words for places, times and people in indirect speech

In indirect speech, we change those words that refer to the speaker's situation (*I, my, this*) to words that reflect the different point of view of the person reporting (*she, her, that*).

- 3 'I don't like **my** hair in **this** style.' → *She said she didn't like her hair in that style.*

We usually change words that refer to the place of speaking (4) and the time of speaking (5) to reflect the point of view of the person reporting.

- 4 'Wordsworth lived **here**, but not in **this** particular cottage.' → *The tour guide explained that Wordsworth had lived there, but not in that particular cottage.*
- 5 'It rained **yesterday** and most of **last week**.' → *The workman pointed out that it had rained the day before and most of the previous week.*

Note also: 'now' → *then*, 'tomorrow' → *the next day*, 'two days ago' → *two days earlier*.

We also change pronouns to reflect the different point of view of the person reporting.

- 6 '**We** fixed it **ourselves**.' → *The boys claimed that they had fixed it themselves.*
- 7 Tom said to Ann, 'I'll give **you my book**.' → *Tom said that he would give her his book.*
- 8 Sandra said to me, 'I'll give **you my book**.' → *Sandra said that she would give me her book.*

Tense in indirect speech

After a reporting verb in the past simple, we usually change present simple to past simple (9) and present perfect to past perfect (10).

- 9 'It **is** late and I **have** a headache.' → *She complained that it was late and she had a headache.*
- 10 'I've heard that they **have** been arguing.' → *He said he'd heard that they had been arguing.*

We can report a past simple as a past simple or change it to a past perfect to emphasize that the event was earlier in the past.

- 11 'I **didn't see** Mark.' → *He said he didn't see Mark. (OR He said he hadn't seen Mark.)*

We can use the present simple after reporting verbs in the present simple for current (12), future (13) or permanent (14) situations. After a reporting verb in the past, we sometimes use a verb in the present for a situation that has not changed (15).

- 12 'Business **is** good and profits **are** up.' → *Delco reports that business is good and profits are up.*
- 13 'It **is** going to be very cold.' → *The forecast says that it is going to be very cold.*
- 14 'My parents **live** in Monaco.' → *She likes to tell everyone that her parents live in Monaco.*
- 15 'I **love** you.' → *He said he loves me.*

Modals in indirect speech

We usually change the modals *can* (→ *could*), *may* (→ *might*) and *will* (→ *would*) in indirect speech.

- 16 'You **can** go.' → *He said we could go.* • 'I'll wait.' → *She said that she would wait.*

We don't change *could, might, ought to* or *should* from direct to indirect speech.

We change *shall* to *would* in predictions (16) and to *should* in offers or suggestions (17).

- 17 'I **shall** do it right away.' → *I remember she said that she would do it right away.*
- 18 '**Shall** I close the door?' → *The new student asked if he should close the door.*

We can use *must* or *had to* when we report that something was necessary.

- 19 'You **must** do more.' → *He said we must do more. OR He said we had to do more.*

6 Complete each sentence in such a way that it is as similar as possible in meaning to the sentence above it.

- 1 'I left my jacket here yesterday.'
He said that
- 2 'Carlin's new book is the funniest thing I've ever read.'
The reviewer wrote that
- 3 'We won't eat it now, but we may have it for lunch tomorrow.'
She said that
- 4 'You should take as much water as you can carry.'
He advised us that
- 5 'I must get something to eat or I'll faint.'
You told me that
- 6 'Demand for new computers in the UK is declining.'
CompCo is reporting that
- 7 'Shall I get rid of these old boxes in the cupboard?'
She asked if

7 Complete this text with these verbs.

*are is has live can can't will
were was had lived could won't would*

When she died at the age of 122, Jeanne Calment was the oldest person on record. This amazing woman, from Arles in France, had not exactly lived what might be described as 'a healthy lifestyle'. Family and friends reported that she (1) fond of cheese, wine and chocolate. She had also smoked cigarettes until she was 117. We asked several experts how a person, especially a cigarette-smoker, (2) live so long. They offered more than one answer. 'The average life expectancy (3) now about 80 for women and 75 for men,' observed Dr Elizabeth Jones, director of the Centre for Studies on Ageing. She says that there (4) been a steady rise in the maximum age of death throughout Europe during the past century and a major reason for this is improved medical care. Another researcher, Dr Michael Glass, says, 'There (5) no theoretical reasons why we (6) have a life span of 200 years.' Better medical care (7) be the only factor, according to Dr Glass. He explained that genetic engineering (8) soon allow us to repair or replace damaged cells, the real cause of ageing. He believes that we (9) be able to stop the ageing process. Other researchers have noted that attitude is also an important factor in longer life. Dr John Park is the author of 'Living Beyond 100'. 'Those who (10) to a ripe old age,' he says, 'are those who (11) cope with stress and other difficulties in life.' He wrote in his best-selling book that people who (12) past 100 (13) almost always optimistic and (14) a great attitude to life.

