

## Change of tenses in reported speech

After present and future reporting verbs, the tenses in the reported speech are normally the same as in the original speech.

Direct speech: He says, 'I don't want to wait any longer.'

Indirect speech: He says that he doesn't want to wait any longer.

Direct speech: The teacher says, 'Work hard.'

Indirect speech: The teacher says that we must work hard.

Notes

The tenses may not change if the statement is still relevant or if it is a universal truth. We can often choose whether to keep the original tenses or change them.

Direct speech: 'I know her,' said James.

Indirect speech: James said that he knows her. OR James said that he knew her.

Direct speech: The teacher said, 'Honesty is the best policy.'

Indirect speech: The teacher said that honesty is the best policy.

Modal verbs in indirect speech

The modals *would*, *should*, *could*, *might*, *ought* and *must* are usually unchanged in indirect speech.

Direct speech: He said, 'I might be late.'

Indirect speech: He said that he might be late.

Direct speech: He said, 'It would be nice if I could see you again.'

Indirect speech: He said that it would be nice if he could see me again.

Because of the change of person, *shall* often becomes *should* in indirect speech.

Direct speech: He said, 'I shall wait.'

Indirect speech: He said that he would wait. (NOT He said that he should wait.)