

Direct to indirect speech: General rules

When we report something using the exact words of the speaker, we use direct speech. When we report something in our own words, we use indirect speech.

Direct speech: The boy said, 'I'm happy with my results.'

Indirect speech: The boy said that he was happy with his results.

General rules for changing direct speech into indirect speech

Omit all inverted commas or quotation marks. End the sentence with a full stop.

If the verb inside the inverted commas/quotation marks is in the present tense, change it into the corresponding past tense. If it is in the simple past tense, change it into the past perfect tense.

Direct speech: The girl said, 'I like singing.'

Indirect speech: The girl said that she liked singing.

Direct speech: Rahul said, 'I will have to reach home by 8.30.'

Indirect speech: Rahul said that he would have to reach home by 8.30.

Direct speech: Alina said, 'I met James yesterday.'

Indirect speech: Alina said that she had met James yesterday.

When the verb inside the quotation marks expresses a universal truth, we do not normally change it into the past tense.

He said, 'All people have equal rights.'

He said that all people have equal rights. (More natural than 'He said that all people had equal rights.')

Use pronouns appropriately.

Study the examples given below.

Direct speech: The boy told the girl, 'I told you that we were not going on a holiday.'

Indirect speech: The boy told the girl that he had told her that they were not going on a holiday.

Direct to indirect speech: General rules

Notes

When the reporting verb is in a present or future tense, we do not change the tense of the verb inside the quotation marks.

Direct speech: She says, 'I will come.'

Indirect speech: She says that she will come.