

Reporting: Advanced points

When we report questions constructed with who / which / what + be + complement, be can be put before or after the complement.

Direct speech: She asked, 'Who is the best singer here?'

Indirect speech: She asked me who the best singer was. OR She asked me who was the best singer.

Direct speech: I asked, 'What is the matter?'

Indirect speech: I asked what the matter was. OR I asked what was the matter.

Direct speech: She asked, 'Where is my bag?'

Indirect speech: She asked where her bag was. OR She asked where was her bag.

Reporting past tenses

In indirect speech, a speaker's present perfect and past tenses are often reported using past perfect tenses.

Direct speech: Alice said, 'I have just written to John.'

Indirect speech: Alice said that she had just written to John.

Direct speech: James said, 'I really enjoyed my trip to Denmark.'

Indirect speech: James said that he had really enjoyed his trip to Denmark.

Grammar notes

It is not always necessary to show the time relationship between the events spoken about and the original speech. In most cases, there is no need to use past perfect tenses to report past events.

Compare:

Direct speech: Dad said, 'John called this morning.'

Indirect speech: Dad said that John called this morning. OR Dad said that John had called this morning.