



Remember to watch the video first! Then read the conversation between Sophie and David, an English language student who Sophie met on her travels. Sophie's helping David understand how to use reported speech.



**Grammar
Snacks**

We use reported speech when we want to tell someone what someone said. We usually use a reporting verb (e.g. *say*, *tell*, *ask*, etc.) and then change the tense of what was actually said in direct speech.

So, *direct speech* is what someone actually says? Like 'I want to know about reported speech'?



David

Yes, and you report it with a reporting verb.

He said he wanted to know about reported speech.

I said, *I want* and you changed it to *he wanted*.



Sophie

Exactly. Verbs in the present simple change to the past simple; the present continuous changes to the past continuous; the present perfect changes to the past perfect; *can* changes to *could*; *will* changes to *would*; etc.

She said she was having the interview at four o'clock.
(Direct speech: '*I'm having* the interview at four o'clock.')

They said they'd phone later and let me know.
(Direct speech: '*We'll phone* later and let you know.')



OK, in that last example, you changed *you* to *me* too.

Yes, apart from changing the tense of the verb, you also have to think about changing other things, like pronouns and adverbs of time and place.

'*We went yesterday.*' > **She said they had been** the day before.
'*I'll come tomorrow.*' > **He said he'd come** the next day.





I see, but what if you're reporting something on the same day, like 'We went yesterday'?

Well, then you would leave the time reference as 'yesterday'. You have to use your common sense. For example, if someone is saying something which is true now or always, you wouldn't change the tense.

'Dogs can't eat chocolate.' > **She said that dogs can't eat chocolate.**

'My hair grows really slowly.' > **He told me that his hair grows really slowly.**



What about reporting questions?

We often use *ask + if/whether*, then change the tenses as with statements. In reported questions we don't use question forms after the reporting verb.

'Do you have any experience working with people?'

They asked if I had any experience working with people.

'What acting have you done?'

They asked me what acting I had done.



Is there anything else I need to know about reported speech?

One thing that sometimes causes problems is imperative sentences.

You mean like 'Sit down, please' or 'Don't go!'?

Exactly. Sentences that start with a verb in direct speech need a *to + infinitive* in reported speech.

She told him to be good. (Direct speech: 'Be good!')

He told them not to forget. (Direct speech: 'Please don't forget.')





OK. Can I also say 'He asked me to sit down'?

Yes. You could say 'He told me to ...' or 'He asked me to ...' depending on how it was said.



OK, I see. Are there any more reporting verbs?

Yes, there are lots of other reporting verbs like *promise*, *remind*, *warn*, *advise*, *recommend*, *encourage* which you can choose, depending on the situation. But *say*, *tell* and *ask* are the most common.



Great. I understand! My teacher said reported speech was difficult.

And I told you not to worry!



Watch the video on our website!

