



## Direct and Indirect Speech

### **Rules for converting Direct into Indirect speech**

To change a sentence of direct speech into indirect speech there are various factors that are considered, such as reporting verbs, modals, time, place, pronouns, tenses, etc. We will discuss each of these factors one by one.

#### **Rule 1 – Direct To Indirect Speech Conversion – Reporting Verb**

When the reporting verb of direct speech is in past tense then all the present tenses are changed to the corresponding past tense in indirect speech.

Direct: She said, ‘I am happy’.

Indirect: She said (that) she was happy.

In indirect speech, tenses do not change if the words used within the quotes (‘’) talk of a habitual action or universal truth.

Direct: He said, ‘We cannot live without air’.

Indirect: He said that we cannot live without air.

The tenses of direct speech do not change if the reporting verb is in the future tense or present tense.

Direct: She says/will say, ‘I am going’

Indirect: She says/will say she is going.

#### **Rule 2 – Direct Speech to Indirect Speech conversion – Present Tense**

##### **Present Perfect Changes to Past Perfect.**

Direct: “I have been to Boston”, she told me.

Indirect: She told me that she had been to Boston.

Present Continuous Changes to Past Continuous

Direct: “I am playing the guitar”, she explained.

Indirect: She explained that she was playing the guitar.

Present Perfect Changes to Past Perfect

Direct: He said, “She has finished her homework“.

Indirect: He said that she had finished her homework.

Simple Present Changes to Simple Past

Direct: “I am unwell”, she said.

Indirect: She said that she was unwell.

### **Rule 3 – Direct Speech to Indirect Speech conversion – Past Tense & Future Tense**

#### **Simple Past Changes to Past Perfect**

Direct: She said, “Irvin arrived on Sunday.”

Indirect: She said that Irvin had arrived on Sunday.

#### **Past Continuous Changes to Past Perfect Continuous**

Direct: “We were playing basketball”, they told me.

Indirect: They told me that they had been playing basketball.

#### **Future Changes to Present Conditional**

Direct: She said, “I will be in Scotland tomorrow.”

Indirect: She said that she would be in Scotland the next day.

#### **Future Continuous Changes to Conditional Continuous**

Direct: He said, “I’ll be disposing of the old computer next Tuesday.”

Indirect: He said that he would be disposing of the old computer the following Tuesday.

#### **Rule 4 – Direct Speech to Indirect Speech Conversion – Interrogative Sentences**

No conjunction is used, if a sentence in direct speech begins with a question (what/where/when) as the “question-word” itself acts as a joining clause.

Direct: “Where do you live?” asked the boy.

Indirect: The boy enquired where I lived.

If a direct speech sentence begins with an auxiliary verb/helping verb, the joining clause should be if or whether.

Direct: She said, ‘Will you come for the party’?

Indirect: She asked whether we would come for the party.

Reporting verbs such as ‘said/ said to’ changes to enquired, asked, or demanded.

Direct: He said to me, ‘What are you wearing’?

Indirect: He asked me what I was wearing.

#### **Rule 5 – Direct Speech to Indirect Speech Conversion – Changes in Modals**

While changing direct speech to indirect speech, the modals used in the sentences change like:

**Can becomes could**

**May becomes might**

**Must become had to /would have to**

Direct : She said, ‘She can dance’.

Indirect: She said that she could dance.

Direct: She said, 'I may buy a dress'.

Indirect: She said that she might buy a dress.

Direct: Rama said, 'I must complete the assignment'.

Indirect: Rama said that he had to complete the assignment.

**There are modals that do not change – Could, Would, Should, Might, Ought to**

Direct: She said, 'I should clean the house'

Indirect: She said that she should clean the house.

**Rule 6 – Direct Speech to Indirect Speech Conversion – Pronoun**

**The first person in direct speech changes as per the subject of the speech.**

Direct: He said, "I am in class Twelfth."

Indirect: He says that he was in class Twelfth.

**The second person of direct speech changes as per the object of reporting speech.**

Direct: She says to them, "You have done your work."

Indirect: She tells them that they have done their work.

**The third person of direct speech doesn't change.**

Direct: He says, "She dances well."

Indirect: He says that she dances well.

**Rule 7 – Direct Speech to Indirect Speech Conversion – Request, Command, Wish, Exclamation**

Indirect Speech is supported by some verbs like requested, ordered, suggested and advised.

Direct: She said to her 'Please complete it'.

Indirect: She requested her to complete it.

Direct: Hamid said to Ramid, ‘Sit down’.

Indirect: Hamid ordered Ramid to sit down.

**In Exclamatory sentences that express grief, sorrow, happiness, applaud, Interjections are removed and the sentence is changed to an assertive sentence.**

Direct: She said, ‘Alas! I am undone’.

Indirect: She exclaimed sadly that she was broke.

### **Rule 8 – Direct Speech to Indirect Speech Conversion – Punctuations**

**In direct speech, the words actually spoken should be in (‘’) quotes and always begin with a capital letter.**

Example: She said, “I am the best.”

**Full stop, comma, exclamation or question mark, are placed inside the closing inverted commas.**

Example: They asked, “Can we sing with you?”

**If direct speech comes after the information about who is speaking, a comma is used to introduce the speech, placed before the first inverted comma.**

Direct speech example: He shouted, “Shut up!”

Direct speech example: “Thinking back,” he said, “she didn’t expect to win.”  
(Comma is used to separate the two direct speeches and no capital letter to begin the second sentence).