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With clear examples and practical tips, it's an ideal resource for students, ESL learners, and exam preparation. 1 Direct Speech 2 Indirect Speech 2.1 Indirect speech rules 3 Rules between direct and indirect speech Direct speech is a form of reporting that presents someone's exact words without any alterations. It is commonly enclosed in quotation marks. Direct speech consists of the following elements. The speaker (subject) reporting verb object(to whom the speaker says something) reported speech Quotation marks Punctuation placement (Commas, periods, question marks, and exclamation points) Understanding Direct speech rules Explanation: "I shall not go to school," are the exact words of Riya, enclosed in quotation marks/inverted commas ("…."). This format, which uses commas and quotation marks/inverted commas, is called direct speech. In this sentence, 'Riya' is the subject or speaker, 'says' is the reporting verb, and 'I shall not go to school' is the reported speech. For examples, Direct: "We can't be quite happy in life," he said. Direct: He said, "The Muslims bury their dead." Direct: "You've overcooked the steak again, Mary", he said. Direct: Ramen said to Bina, "I'm going to your house this, week." Direct: Ritu said, "I am going to the store." Direct: "I can't believe it," she whispered, "but I saw a unicorn in the garden." People also ask Indirect speech, on the other hand, involves paraphrasing someone's words and reporting them indirectly, without using quotation marks. It requires a few changes in structure, such as tense and pronoun. removing quotation marks changing pronouns adjusting tenses modifying time expressions making it into a statement Understanding Indirect speech rules Similarly, we can report the above sentence without quoting Riya's exact words while keeping the meaning the same. This format is called indirect speech. In this format, no commas or quotation marks/inverted commas are used; only a full stop (.) is used at the end of the sentence. For examples, Direct Speech: "We can't be quite happy in life," he said.Indirect Speech: He said that they couldn't be quite happy in life. Direct Speech: He said, "The Muslims bury their dead."Indirect Speech: He said that the Muslims bury their dead. Direct Speech: "You've overcooked the steak again, Mary", he said.Indirect Speech: He told Mary that she had overcooked the steak again. Direct Speech: Ramen said to Bina, "I'm going to your house this, week."Indirect Speech: Ramen told Bina that he was going to her house that week. Direct Speech: John said, "I am going to the store."Indirect Speech: John said that he was going to the store. Direct Speech: "I can't believe it," she whispered, "but I saw a unicorn in the garden."Indirect Speech: She whispered that she couldn't believe it but that she had seen a unicorn in the garden. The following comparison highlights the key differences between direct and indirect speech rules, including punctuation, tense changes, and adjustments to pronouns and time references. PointsDirect SpeechIndirect Speech1. DefinitionQuotes the exact words spoken.Reports the message without quoting exactly.2. PunctuationUses quotation marks ("…").No quotation marks are used.3. TenseTense stays the same as originally spoken.Tense often shifts back (e.g., present to past).4. PronounsPronouns remain the same.Pronouns change to fit the reporting perspective.5. Time ReferencesTime references remain unchanged.Time references often change (e.g., "today" becomes "that day").Example 1She said, "I am going to the store."John asked, "Can you help me?"She said that she was going to the store.John asked if I could help him. Discover the essential rules of direct and indirect speech with a variety of examples to improve your language skills. Effortlessly understand the intricacies of converting statements, questions, and commands from one form to another. "Say" and "tell" are two frequently used reporting verbs. "Say" is generally followed by the reported speech, while "tell" is followed by the indirect object (the person being addressed). Direct: He says, "I am your friend."Indirect: He says that he is your friend. Direct: He said to me, "I'm going to the store."Indirect: She told me that he was going to the store. Direct SpeechIndirect Speechsaysaysay to metell mesays to themtells themsaidsaidsaid to himtold himshall/will sayshall/will say to hershall/will tell her When reporting questions, "ask" and "inquire" are commonly employed reporting verbs. Direct: He said to me, "Where are you going?"Indirect: He asked where I was going. Direct: She said, "When will the concert start?"Indirect: She inquired, "When will the concert start?" Direct: Sarah said, "What time does the movie start?"Indirect: Sarah asked what time the movie started. Direct: "Could you please provide more details?" she said to me.Indirect: She inquired politely if I could provide more details. Direct: The customer said, "Do you have this item in stock?"Indirect: The customer inquired if that item had in stock. To report imperative sentences, "Request", "Advise", "Order", and "beg" are often used. Direct: "Please close the door," she said.Indirect: She requested that the door be closed. Direct: "You should study regularly," he said.Indirect: He advised that regular studying should be done. Direct: "Stand up straight," the sergeant said.Indirect: The sergeant ordered that they stand up straight. Direct: He said to me, "Go home at once"Indirect: He ordered me to go home at once. Direct: She said, "Do not run in the sun"Indirect: She advised not to run in the sun." Direct: "Please forgive me," she said.Indirect: She begged for forgiveness. If the Reporting Verb is in the Present Tense, there is no change in the tense in the Reported Verb when Direct Speech is converted into Indirect Narration. Direct: Arnab says, "The room is dark."Indirect: Arnab says that the room is dark. Direct: Arnab says, "The room was dark."Indirect: Arnab says that the room was dark. Direct: Arnab says, "I shall finish the work."Indirect: Arnab says that he will finish the work. Direct: Mary says, "I am going to the party."Indirect: Mary says that she is going to the party. Direct: He tells us, "I will finish the project by tomorrow."Indirect: He tells us that he will finish the project by tomorrow. If the Reporting Verb is in the Future Tense, there is no change in the tense in the Reported Verb when Direct Speech is converted into Indirect Narration. Direct: Sarah will say, "I am going to the store."Indirect: Sarah will say that she is going to the store. Direct: John will say, "I have completed the assignment."Indirect: John will say that he has completed the assignment. Direct: Arnab will say, "The room is dark."Indirect: Arnab will say that the room is dark. Direct: Arnab will say, "The room was dark."Indirect: Arnab will say that the room was dark. Direct: Arnab will say, "I shall finish the work."Indirect: Arnab will say that he will finish the work. Rule 6: Rules for Transforming Direct and Indirect Speech of Past Tense If the Reporting verb of the Direct Narration is in the Past Tense, the Present Tense of the Verb in the Reported Speech of Direct Narration is changed into the corresponding Past Tense in Indirect Narration. Reporting VerbReported Verb in Direct SpeechReported speech Verb in Indirect SpeechPastEx: He said,Present Indefinite" I love you"Past IndefiniteHe said that he loved me.PastEx: The teacher said,Universal Truth or Regular Habits" The sun rises in the east."Remains UnchangedThe teacher said that the sun rises in the east.PastEx: She said,Present Continuous" I am singing a song."Past ContinuousShe said that she was singing.PastEx: Mother said, Present Perfect " I have finished cooking."Past Perfect Mother said that she had finished cooking.PastEx: Maria said, Past Indefinite"You did the work."Past PerfectMaria said that I had done the work.PastEx: Soumen said, Past Continuous" I was playing football."Past Perfect ContinuousSoumen said that he had been playing football.PastEx: Ravvi said,Past Perfect" You had insulted me."Remains UnchangedRavi said that I had insulted him.PastEx: They said,Shall/Will"We shall help him."Should/WouldThey said that they would help him.PastEx: Doctor said,Can / May" You can do it."Could / MightThe doctor said that I could do it. Direct: Rohan said, "She works hard."Indirect: Rohan said that she worked hard. Direct: Rohan said, "She is singing a song."Indirect: Rohan said that she was singing a song. Direct: The guest said shouting, "We have arrived ."Indirect: The guest shouted that they had arrived. Direct: My sister said, "It has been raining hard for 3 days".Indirect: My sister said that it had been raining hard for 3 days. Direct: Father said, "I visited the Taj yesterday."Indirect: Father said that he had visited the Taj the previous day. Direct: The boys said, "They were traveling in the park."Indirect: The boys said that they had been traveling in the park. Direct: The reporters commented, "The Kohinoor had been lost long ago".Indirect: The reporters commented that the Kohinoor had been lost long ago. Direct: Jyotsna said, " She had been doing the work for 3 hours".Indirect: Jyotsna said that she had been doing the work for 3 hours. The Tense of the Verb remains unchanged in Indirect Narration in cases of General Statements of Facts, Universal Truths, Commonplace Occurrences, and Habitual or Repeated Actions. No real change occurs in these cases. Only there will be present Tense alone. Direct: The boy said to his mother, " The sun rises in the East".Indirect: The boy told his mother that the sun rises in the East. [Universal Truth] Direct: The monk answered, " Man is mortal".Indirect: The monk answered that man is mortal. [Universal Truth] Direct: The teacher told the students, " Perseverance always leads to success."Indirect: The teacher told the students that perseverance always leads to success. (a) If the subject of the reported speech of direct form is in the first person, the subject of the reported speech will be replaced by the subject of the reporting verb in indirect form, but the number must be the same. [singular > singular and plural > plural] Examples: Direct: She says, "I am ill today."Indirect: She says that she is ill that day. Change of 1st Person (b) If the subject of the reported speech in the Direct Form is in the second person, the subject of the reported speech will be replaced by the object of the reporting verb in the indirect form, but the number must be the same. [singular > singular and plural > plural] Example: Direct: He says to me, " You can do this work."Indirect: He tells me that I can do that work. Change of 2nd Person (c) If the subject of the reported speech of Direct Form is in the third person, there will be no change in the person of the Indirect Form. Direct: I said, "He will not wait for his friend."Indirect: I said that he would not wait for his friend. Change of 3rd Person Subject ObjectI (1st person, singular)me (1st person, singular)We (1st person, plural)us (1st person, plural)You (2nd person, singular / plural)You (2nd person, singular / plural)He (3rd person, singular)him (3rd person, singular)She (3rd person, singular)her (3rd person, singular)They (3rd person, plural)them (3rd person, plural)Change of Pronouns In the case of demonstrative pronouns, replace them with appropriate pronouns in indirect speech. Example: Direct: "This is my book," she said.Indirect: She said that this was her book. When introducing indirect speech with a reporting verb, use a comma to separate the reporting verb from the reported speech. Example: She said, "I'll be there on time." If the direct speech is a question, change the question mark to a full stop when converting to indirect speech. Example: Direct: He asked, "Are you coming to the party?"Indirect: He asked if I was coming to the party. In cases where the direct speech has an exclamation mark, replace it with a full stop in indirect speech. Example: Direct: She exclaimed, "What a beautiful day!"Indirect: She exclaimed that it was a beautiful day. When dealing with modals like can, could, will, would, may, might, shall, should, must, etc., use the appropriate past form in indirect speech. Direct: She said, "You should respect your elders.Indirect: She said that I should respect my elders. Direct: She said, "I can speak French fluently.Indirect: She said that she could speak French fluently. Direct: May I borrow your pen?" she asked.Indirect: She asked if she might borrow my pen. Direct: He said, "You must complete the assignment by tomorrow.Indirect: He said that I must complete the assignment by the next day. In indirect speech, conditional sentences undergo specific changes, especially when they involve "will" or "would." Direct: He said, "I will help you."Indirect: He said that he would help me. Direct: He said, "I will help you with your projectIndirect: He said that he would help me with my project. When using adverbs of time in indirect speech, adjust them to match the new timeframe. Example: Direct: "I will come tomorrow," she said.Indirect: She said that she would come the next day. Similar to adverbs of time, adverbs of place need modification in indirect speech. Example: Direct: " I live here," he said.Indirect: He said that he lived there. We can also use Adverbs of manner in indirect speech, requiring appropriate adjustments. Example: Direct: "He ran quickly," she said.Indirect: She said that he ran quickly. In Indirect Narration, words denoting Time, Place, Manner, Distance, and Direction used in the quoted speech are correspondingly changed to conform to the point of view of the Reporter. Thus, the sense of nearness is changed into that of Distance, and so on. Direct NarrationIndirect Narrationnowthen /at that timeagobeforehenceforththenceforthlong agolong beforehenceforwardthenceforwardtodayThat day /the same daytonightthat night /the same nighttomorrowthe next day /the following dayyesterdaythe previous day /the day beforeyesterday nightthe previous night /the night beforelast nightthe previous night /the night beforelast eveningthe previous evening /the evening beforelast weekthe previous week /the week beforelast fortnightthe previous fortnight /the fortnight beforelast monththe previous month /the month beforelast yearthe previous year /the year beforelast occasionthe previous occasionnext daythe following day /the day afternext weekthe following week /the week afternext fortnightthe following fortnight /the fortnight afternext monththe following month /the month afternext yearthe following year /the year afteron the next occasionon the following occasion Direct NarrationIndirect Narrationherethereat this placeat that place Direct NarrationIndirect Narrationthusso /in that wayin this wayin that wayin this mannerin that mannerherebythereby Direct NarrationIndirect Narrationthisthatthesethose Direct NarrationIndirect NarrationhitherthitherhencethenceFrom hereFrom there To convert Assertive sentences into indirect speech the following rules are applied. (a) No comma and Inverted comma in Indirect Speech, only full stop at the end.(b) Reporting Verbs changed from Direct Speech to Indirect Speech; 'say – say', 'says – says', 'said – said', 'said to – told', 'say to – tell', 'says to – tells'.(c) Connective 'that' added before Reported Speech in indirect Narration. Example: Direct: He said to me, "I am ill."Indirect: He told me that he was ill. Direct: Mary said, "I am happy with my results."Indirect: Mary said that she was happy with her results. Direct: Tom said, "I will attend the meeting tomorrow."Indirect: Tom said that he would attend the meeting the next day. Direct: Alice said, "I have finished my homework."Indirect: Alice said that she had finished her homework. Direct: David said, "We are planning a trip to the mountains."Indirect: David said that they were planning a trip to the mountains. Forming indirect speech with questions necessitates some adjustments: When reporting yes/no questions, use "if" or "whether" and invert the subject and auxiliary verb in indirect speech. Example: Direct: John asked, "Are you coming to the party?"Indirect: John asked if I was coming to the party. Direct: Sarah asked, "Do you like chocolate?"Indirect: Sarah asked if I liked chocolate. Direct: Mike asked, "Have you finished your project?"Indirect: Mike asked if I had finished my project. Direct: Emma asked, "Will you help me with my homework?"Indirect: Emma asked if I would help her with her homework. Direct: "Will you be there?" he asked.Indirect: He asked if I would be there. For reporting wh-questions, maintain the question word and adjust the word order in indirect speech. (a) 'Tell' and 'say' in Direct Narration are changed to 'ask', 'enquire of', 'question', 'want to know' etc. in Indirect Narration.(b) In place of introductory 'that'. 'if' or 'whether' should be used.(c) In Indirect Narration a full stop (.) must be put in place of a question mark(?) at the end of the sentence.(d) In Direct Narration the Reported Speech begins with W-word or how, in Indirect Narration the same Wh-word or how is retained. Example: Direct: Lisa asked, "Where are you going?"Indirect: Lisa asked where I was going. Direct: Mark asked, "What time does the movie start?"Indirect: Mark asked what time the movie started. Direct: Jennifer asked, "Why did you leave early?"Indirect: Jennifer asked why I had left early. Direct: Tom asked, "How do you solve this problem?"Indirect: Tom asked how I solved that problem. Direct: "Where are you going?" she asked.Indirect: She asked where I was going. Direct: The teacher said to me, "Why are you late?"Indirect: The teacher asked me why I was late. The indirect speech also involves reporting imperatives, which are commands, requests, or advice: When reporting commands, use the reporting verb "tell" and change the imperative verb to the corresponding infinitive. Example: Direct: The teacher said, "Open your books."Indirect: The teacher told the students to open their books. For reporting requests, employ the reporting verb "ask" and convert the imperative verb to the corresponding infinitive. Example: Direct: She said, "Please help me with this."Indirect: She asked for help with that. (a) Reporting verbs of Direct Speech changed into order or command, advise, or request according to sense in Indirect Speech.(b) 'To' is placed before Reported speech in Indirect Narration; for the negative imperative sentence 'not to' is used.(c) 'not to' can also be replaced by 'forbid', or 'prohibit'.(d) 'Let' implies 'suggestion' or 'proposal'; Reporting verb will be 'suggest' or 'propose' in Indirect Speech. 'that' is used before Reported speech in Indirect Narration(e) 'Let' without 'suggestion' or 'proposal'; Reporting verb will be 'tell', or 'wish' according to sense in Indirect Speech. 'that' is used before Reported speech in Indirect Narration. Example: Direct: Mother said to me, "Don't run in the sun."Indirect: Mother advised me not to run in the sun. Direct: She said to me, "Let us go for a picnic."Indirect: She suggested that we should go for a picnic. The following rules are used to change an optative sentence from direct speech to indirect speech (a) Reporting verbs changed to 'wish', 'pray', and 'bless' in Indirect Speech.(b) Linker, 'that' is placed before Reported speech in Indirect Narration. Example: Direct: The monk said to me, " May God bless you."Indirect: The monk wished that God might bless me. (a) The reporting verb is changed into exclaim (in joy), exclaim (in grief), cried out (in sorrow), pray, wish, etc.(b) Examinations are turned into statements.(c) Interjections (Alas, Oh, Hurrah) are omitted.(d) 'What', and 'How' used in exclamation should be replaced by great, great, very, very much, and big. Example: Direct: The boys said, "Hurrah! we have won the match."Indirect: The boy exclaimed in joy that they had won the match. Change the following sentences into indirect speech. Q: Ratan said to Anita, "I don't like your brother". Ans: Ratan told Anita that she did not like her brother. Q: The hermit said to the boys, "God is present everywhere." Ans: The hermit told the boys that God is present everywhere. Q::He said to you, "You shouldn't play in my garden." Ans: He told you that you should not play in his garden. Q: The class teacher said to the students. "The inspector will visit our school today." Ans: The class teacher told the students that the inspector would visit their school that day. Q: He said to me, "I don't believe you." Ans: He told me that he didn't believe me. Q: She said to her son, "I've often told you not to play with fire." Ans: She told her son that she had often told him not to play with fire. Q: Sitesh said to Lina, "I want you to go to Patna with me." Ans: Sitesh told Lina that he wanted her to go to Patna with him. Q: "We can't be quite happy in life," he said. Ans: He said that they couldn't be quite happy in life. Q: He said, "The Muslims bury their dead." He said that the Muslims bury their dead. Q: "You've overcooked the steak again, Mary", he said. Ans: He told Mary that she had overcooked the steak again. Q: Ramen said to Bina, "I'm going to your house this, week." Ans: Ramen told Bina that he was going to her house that week. Q: He said, "We will discuss this tomorrow." Ans: He said that they would discuss that the next day Q: He said to me, "You are wicked; so I shall not mix with you." Ans: He told me that I was wicked; so he would not mix with me. Q: He said to you, "I was much struck by your eloquence." Ans: He told you that he had been much struck by your eloquence. Q: We remarked, "God is gracious." Ans: We remarked that God is gracious. Q: I said to my mother, "I shall always obey you." Ans: I told my mother that I should always obey her. Q: He said to Gopal, "You were a mere boy when I saw you last." Ans: He told Gopal that he was a mere boy when he had seen him last. Q: I said to him, "The sky is blue." Ans: I told him that the sky is blue. Q: He said to me, "You will feel the consequences." Ans: He told me that I should feel the consequences. Q: She said to you, "I am not angry with you." Ans: She told you that she was not angry with you. Q: I said to them, "You have done wrong." Ans: I told them that they had done wrong. Q: He said, "I visit the temple every day." Ans: He said that he visited the temple every day. Direct: He said, "I am learning French." Indirect: He said that he ___ learning French. a) was b) is c) will be d) had been Answer: a) was Direct: She asked, "Do you like pizza?" Indirect: She asked if I ___ pizza. a) liked b) like c) will like d) had liked Answer: a) liked Direct: They said, "We will visit Paris next year." Indirect: They said that they ___ Paris the following year. a) will visit b) would visit c) visit d) had visited Answer: b) would visit Direct: John asked, "Where are you going?" Indirect: John asked where I ___ going. a) am b) were c) was d) had been Answer: c) was Direct: Mary said, "I have finished my homework." Indirect: Mary said that she ___ finished her homework. a) has b) had c) will have d) is Answer: b) had Direct: Peter asked, "Can you help me?" Indirect: Peter asked if I ___ help him. a) can b) could c) will d) would Answer: b) could Direct: The teacher said, "The Earth revolves around the Sun." Indirect: The teacher said that the Earth ___ around the Sun. a) revolves b) revolve c) revolved d) is revolving Answer: a) revolves Direct: She said, "I was sleeping when you called." Indirect: She said that she ___ sleeping when I called. a) was b) had been c) is d) will be Answer: b) had been Direct: He said, "I will be there by noon." Indirect: He said that he ___ be there by noon. a) will b) would c) is d) had Answer: b) would Direct: They asked, "Why are you late?" Indirect: They asked why I ___ late. a) am b) are c) was d) had been Answer: c) was Ans: The main difference lies in the quoting style. Direct speech involves repeating someone's exact words, while indirect speech reports what was said without quoting verbatim. Ans: While backshifting is common, some exceptions exist, especially in cases where the statement's truth remains constant. Ans: When reporting multiple speakers, use appropriate reporting verbs and introduce each person's dialogue in a logical sequence. Ans: Combining direct and indirect speech in a sentence is possible, but it requires precision to avoid confusion. Ans: Reporting verbs like "said," "told," "asked," "claimed," and "explained" are frequently employed. Ans: Focus on maintaining consistency in style and verb tense to ensure a smooth transition between direct and indirect speech. Ans: Direct speech is usually enclosed within quotation marks and directly quotes someone's words. Indirect speech, on the other hand, reports those words without quotation marks, often using reporting verbs like "said," "told," "asked," etc. Ans: Yes, the choice of reporting verbs can convey the speaker's attitude or emotions towards the reported speech. Different reporting verbs can modify the meaning slightly. Ans: Common reporting verbs for indirect speech include "say," "tell," "ask," "inquire," "explain," "describe," and more. Ans: The tense in indirect speech is generally shifted back one step. For example, present simple becomes past simple, present continuous becomes past continuous, and so on. Ans: No, quotation marks are not used in indirect speech as they report the speech without directly quoting it. Ans: Certainly! In the story, he said, "I love you," to which she replied that she loved him too. Ans: It is possible to omit the reporting verb in some cases, especially in informal contexts, but including it adds clarity and structure to the reported speech. Ans: Most tenses change in indirect speech, but the changes depend on the context and the tense of the original statement. Ans: Certainly! Here are a few more examples: Direct: "I am reading a book," she said. Indirect: She said that she was reading a book. Direct: "We have completed the project," they exclaimed. Indirect: They exclaimed that they had completed the project. Ans: Practice by converting direct speech to indirect speech and vice versa using various reporting verbs, tenses, and pronouns. Additionally, read books or articles and identify the reported speech used by the authors. We often have to give information about what people say or think. In order to do this, we can use direct or quoted speech or indirect or reported speech.Direct SpeechSaying exactly what someone has said is called direct speech (sometimes called quoted speech).Here what a person says appears within quotation marks ("…") and should be word for word (exactly as it was originally said).For example:She said, "Today's lesson is on presentations." Or "Today's lesson is on presentations," she said.Indirect speechIndirect speech (sometimes called reported speech or Narration), doesn't use quotation marks to enclose what the person said and it doesn't have to be word for word. Thus, in indirect speech, we convey the speaker's message in our own words.When reporting speech the tense usually changes. This is because when we use reported speech, we are usually talking about a time in the past (because obviously, the person who spoke originally spoke in the past). The verbs therefore usually have to be in the past too.For example:Direct Speech: He said, "I'm going to the cinema".Indirect Speech: He said that he was going to the cinema.Direct and Indirect Speech RulesBelow is a reported speech tense change chart with the rules for backshifting for each tense and for modal verbs.Reported speech does not go back a tense if it is already in the past perfect (there is no further back it can go), and some modal verbs also do not change.Direct SpeechReported Speechpresent simplepast simple"I'm a teacher"He said he was a teacherpresent continuouspast continuous"I'm having lunch with my parents"He said he was having lunch with his parents.present perfect simplepast perfect simple"I've been to France three times"He said he had been to France three times.present perfect continuouspast perfect continuous"I've been working very hard"He said he had been working very hard.past simplepast perfect"I bought a new car"He said he had bought a new car.past continuouspast perfect continuous"It was raining earlier"He said it had been raining earlier.past perfectpast perfect (No change)"The play had started when I arrived"She said the play had started when she arrivedpast perfect continuouspast perfect continuous (No change)"I had already been living in London for five years"Jack told me she had already been living in London for five yearsFuture Tense shall/willFuture in the Past should/wouldEli said, "I will buy the book tomorrow"Eli said that she would buy the book tomorrow.Other verb forms also sometimes changewill would"I will come and see you soon"He said he would come and see me soon.cancould"I can swim under water for two minutes"He said he could swim under water for two minutes.musthad to"All tickets must be bought in advance"He said that all tickets had to be bought in advance.shallshould"What shall we do about it?"He asked what we should do about it.maymight"May I smoke?"He asked if he might smoke.ought toNo change"You ought to come at 7 pm"He told me I ought to come at 7 pmShouldNo change"I should have helped you"He said he should have helped meWouldNo change"I would walk the dog at night"She said she would walk the dog at nightCouldNo change"You culdn't do it"He told me I culdn't do itMightNo change"I might arrive late"He said he might arrive late1. Simple Present to Simple PastDirect: He said, "The boy goes home." Indirect: He said that the boy went home.2. Present Continuous to Past ContinuousDirect: Ram said, "I am reading a book." Indirect: Ram said that he was reading a book.3. Present Perfect to Past Perfect Direct: The girl said, "I have lost my pen." Indirect: The girl said that she had lost her pen.4. Present Perfect Continuous to Past Perfect ContinuousDirect: He said, "Ram has been going." Indirect: He said that Ram had been going.5. Past Indefinite to Past Perfect Direct: Mother said, "I bought a watch for you."Indirect: Mother said that she had bought a watch for him.6. Past Continuous to Past Perfect ContinuousDirect: Raju said, "I was repairing a car." Indirect: Raju said that he had been repairing a car.7. Future Tense (shall/will) to future in the Past (should/would) Direct: The teacher said, "I shall give you notes." Indirect: The teacher said that he would give them notes.8. Conditional to Perfect Conditional Direct:Direct: He said, "If I had the money I could buy the car." Indirect: She said that if he had the money he could have bought the car. 9. Past Perfect Tense: No ChangeDirect: She said, "I had gone to Bhagalpur." Indirect: She said that she had gone to Bhagalpur.10. Auxiliary Verbs (would, should, might, could, ought, must) — No ChangeDirect: He said, "I would like to take milk." Indirect: He said that he would like to take milk.Direct: The boy said, "The teacher could have solved it in no time." Indirect: The boy said that the teacher could have solved it in no time.Direct: He said, "The boy must apologise to the teacher." Indirect: He said that the boy must apologise to the teacher.The reporting verb said/said to is changed in asked, demanded, ordered, enquired as per the nature of the sentence.Example:Toni said, "What is Luna doing?" Toni asked me what Luna was doing.While a sentence starts with reporting verb then at the conversion time if /whether is used as the joining clause.Example:Luna said, "Will she come for lunch?" Luna asked if she would come for lunch.In case the sentence starts from "Wh" question word, then no extra conjunction is used.Example:The boy asked, "Where do you stay?" The boy inquired where I stayedThings are slightly more complicated with imperativespositive imperativetell + infinitiveShut up!He told me to shut up.negative imperativetell + not + infinitiveDon't do that again!He told me not to do it again.imperatives as requestsask + infinitivePlease give me some moneyHe asked me to give him some money.Time and place references often have to changenow thentoday that dayhere therethis thatthis weekthat weektomorrowthe following day, the next day, the day afternext weekthe following week, the next week, the week afteryesterday the previous day, the day beforelast weekthe previous week, the week beforeagopreviously, before2 weeks ago2 weeks previously, 2 weeks beforetonightthat nightlast Saturdaythe previous Saturday, the Saturday beforenext Saturdaythe following Saturday, the next Saturday, the Saturday after, that SaturdayExamples:I went to the theatre last night. He said he had gone to the theatre the night before.I'm having a party next weekend. He said he was having a party the next weekend.I'm staying here until next week. He said he was staying there until the following week.I came over from London 3 years ago. He said he had come over from London 3 years before.When verbs don't follow the rules?The verb tenses do not always follow the rules shown above. For example, if the reporting verb is in the present tense, there is no change in the reported sentence. Also, a sentence in direct speech in present or future tense can remain the same if what is said is still true or relevant.For example:You've invited someone for dinner at your house, and the phone rings. It's them! They say:(on the phone) "I'm sorry, but I think I'm going to be a bit late. There's a lot of traffic."After you finish speaking on the phone, you say to someone else:That was Juan. He said he thinks he's going to be late because there's a lot of traffic.Another example:A friend says to you: "Maria's ill. She's got chickenpox!"You say to someone else: Laura said that Maria's ill. She's got chickenpox.However, the following day you see Maria at the beach. You're surprised and say to her:Laura said that you were ill. She said you had chickenpox.This has to change to the past because it isn't true. Maria obviously isn't ill.Direct statements in past tense do not always change either, because a change might alter the meaning or just make it sound confusing.For example:A friend is telling you about the horrible weather: "It started raining heavily when I left work." (This is where things get confusing):He said it had started raining heavily when he had left work (it sounds horrible and the sentence is almost nothing but verbs).He said it had started raining heavily when he left work (is wrong because it means it was already raining when he left work)He said it started raining heavily when he left work (is the best version because it is accurate, short, and there is no confusion because of the time context)Generally speaking, the past simple and continuous don't always need to be changed if:There is a time context which makes everything clear, and/or there is another action already using the past perfect, which might alter the meaning or make things confusing.Rules for Universal Truth, Habitual Facts, etc.(i) If the Reported Speech states some General, Universal or Habitual Truth, Proverb, Historical event in the past, Improbable future condition, the Present Tense used there is not changed into the corresponding past form.Example:Direct: My friend said, "I am an early riser." Indirect: My friend said that he is an early riser.Direct: Father said, "Man is the only animal that cooks his food." Indirect: Father said that man is the only animal that cooks his food.Direct: The teacher said, "Honesty is the best policy." Indirect: The teacher said that honesty is the best policy.Direct: The teacher said, "The earth moves around the sun." Indirect: The teacher said that the earth moves around the sun.(ii) The Past Indefinite Tense or the Past Continuous Tense is not changed if the Reported Speech states two actions which took place at the same time.Example:Direct: Sarla said, "When Ram was reading Sham was writing." Indirect: Sarla said that when Ram was reading Sham was writing.(iii) The Simple Past is not changed if the Reported Speech states a past historical event or fact.Example:Direct: The teacher said, "Akbar died in 1605 AD." Indirect: The teacher said that Akbar died in 1605 AD.(iv) Vocative and nominative of address are omitted altogether and their sense is expressed in the sentence.Example:Direct: The speaker said, "Gentlemen, I will tell you what is going there." Indirect: The speaker told his audience (those present) that he would tell them what was going thereDirect: He said, "I hope, friends, you will support me." Indirect: He said that he hoped they would support him.(v) Past tense subjunctive after would like, would rather, etc. do not change.Example:Direct: He said, "I would rather she played." Indict: He said that he would rather she played. (vi) Pure imaginary conditions (if …. were clauses) do not change.Example:Direct: He said, "If I were rich, I would settle in Mumbai. Indirect: He said that if he were rich, he would settle in Mumbai.(vii) Simple Past or Past Continuous tense in Time Clauses do not normally change. The main verb may either remain unchanged or may become the past perfect, as,Example:Direct: He said. "When we lived/were living in Chennai, we often visited Rameshwarm" Indirect: He said that when they lived/ were living in Chennai, they often visited/ had visite RameshwarmRules for the Change of PronounsIf the direct speech has a pronoun, its person is changed, when necessary, to refer in the indirect to the same individual as it does in the direct.First person: the first person in reported speech changes according to the subject of reporting speech.Example:Soni said, "I am a good girl." Soni said that she was a good girl.Second person: in reported speech change of the second person depends on the object of reporting speech.Example:I told them, "You have finished your work." I told them that they had finished their work.Third person: the third person remains unchanged.Example:He said, "She is in Delhi." He said that she was in Delhi.Table for the changes in pronounDirect SpeechIndirect SpeechIHe/sheYouHe/she/theyWeTheyTheyTheyHeHeSheSheItItUsThemOurTheirHisHisHerHerItsItsExamples:Direct: He said, "I can cross this river." Indirect: He said that he could cross that river.Direct: You said. "I can cross this river." Indirect: You said that you could cross that river.Direct: I said, "I can cross this river." Indirect: I said that I could cross that river.You also need to be careful with personal pronouns. They need to be changed according to the situation. You need to know the context.For example, there is possible confusion when you try to change reported speech to direct speech:She said she'd been waiting for hours. (Is 'she' one person or two different people?)I told them they would have to ask permission. (Are we talking about two groups of people or only one?)NEXT: Question Tags Rules Direct and Indirect Speech: In English Grammar, direct and Indirect speech are used in instances when we wish to repeat or convey a speech or statement of some other person. Both direct and indirect speech describes what a third person said or conveyed in the past. Indirect speech is more commonly employed unless it's a direct quotation, which is consistently enclosed in double quotation marks. Whereas indirect speech is used when you want to convey someone's statement using your own precise words. It's worth highlighting that indirect speech is consistently expressed using verbs like "said," "told," or "asked." Direct and Indirect Speech English has two main ways to report what someone says: Direct and Indirect speech. Direct speech uses the exact words someone said, for example: "I am hungry," she said. Indirect speech paraphrases what was said, like: She said she was hungry. Both methods help us share information about events, actions, or situations by repeating what others have communicated. Direct speech is like quoting someone exactly, while indirect speech summarizes their words. To help you understand these two types better, we've included clear explanations, examples, and exercises. This will make it easier to grasp the differences and use both types of reported speech correctly. Direct Speech Direct speech is the mode of expression that directly presents the words spoken or quoted by a third person. Generally, direct speech is written inside quotation marks ("”). The quotation is used to differentiate the speech of the third person that has happened in the past. Thus direct speech conveys statements or conversations of someone in the past tense but quoted inside the quotation marks in the present or future tense. Examples: Kiran said, "I am doing my work." They said, " We will go for the function." He asked, "Can I make this?" Indirect Speech Indirect Speech is used when we convey what someone said in our own words without repeating the actual text of that person. Instead of using quotation marks, the conjunction word, 'that' is used. Thus speaker's words and sentences are reframed into our own words in Indirect speech. Some examples of indirect speech are: Direct speech: Kiran said, "I am doing my work." Indirect speech: Kiran said that she is doing her work. Direct speech: They said, " We will go for the function." Indirect speech: They said that they would go to the function. Direct speech: He asked, "Can I make this?" Indirect speech: He asked whether he can make that. Rules for Direct and Indirect Speech There are certain rules and regulations followed while converting a simple direct speech into indirect speech. Certain factors such as Verbs, Tenses, Modals, time, place, and pronouns are also considered while changing. The following are the rules applied when you convert direct speech to indirect speech in English grammar. Rule-1: Direct To Indirect Speech Conversion – Reporting Verb The reporting verb is an important factor to note when changing a direct to an indirect sentence. When the reporting verb is past tense, then the verb inside the quotation is also changed to past when changing a sentence from direct to indirect speech. Examples: Direct: He said,' I am sad.' Indirect: He said that he was sad. An exception is for cases like a universal truth, the tenses remain the same. Teena said," The sun rises in the east". Teena said that the sun rises in the east. If the reporting verb is in present/future tense, then the tense remains the same as in direct speech. Direct: She says/will say, 'I am coming.' Indirect: She says/will say she is coming. Rule 2: Direct Speech to Indirect Speech Conversion – Tenses If the sentences inside quotes in direct speech are present tense, it is changed to past tense when changed to indirect speech. The rule in the following table is applied while changing tenses from direct speech to reported speech. Changing Direct Speech into Indirect Speech Direct Speech Indirect Speech Present Simple Tense do /does V1 Past Simple Tense did + V1 V2 Present Progressive Tense is/am/are + V4 Past Progressive Tense was /were + V4 Present Perfect Tense has /have + V3 Past Perfect Tense had + V3 Present Perfect Progressive has been /have been + V4 Past Perfect Progressive had been + V4 Past Simple Tense did + V1 V2 Past Perfect Tense had + V3 Past Perfect Tense had/have + V3 Past Perfect Tense had + V3 Past Perfect Progressive had been/have been + V4 Past Perfect Progressive had been + V4 Future Simple Tense will + V1 would + V1 Future Progressive Tense will be + V4 would be + V4 Future Perfect Tense will have + V3 would have + V3 Future Perfect Progressive will have been + V4 would have been + V4 Where V1- Base verb, V2- Simple past V3- Past participle V4- Progressive verb (verbs ending with 'ing'). Examples of change in Tenses Direct Speech Indirect Speech Ram said, "I do my work." Ram said that he did his work. They said, "We are going now." They said that they were going then. Sara said, " I have done my work." Sara said that she had done her work. Rohit said, "I have been doing my work." Rohit said that he had been doing his work. Ram said, "I did my work" Ram said that he had done his work. They said,"We have done our work" They said that they had done their work. They said, "We have been doing our work." They said that they had been doing their work. Ram Said, " I had been doing my work." Ram said that he had been doing his work. Sara said, "I will do my work." Sara said that she would do her work. They said, "We will be going out." They said that they would be going out. They said, "We will have done this work." They said that they would have done that work. Ram said, "I will have been doing this work" Ram said that he would have been doing that work. Rule 3: Direct to Indirect speech Conversion Interrogative sentences If a sentence starts with a question word like what, when, and why in direct speech, the question word itself acts as the joining class. Example: Direct speech: "Where do you live ?" Asked the boy. Indirect Speech: The boy enquired where I lived. Rule 4: Direct to Indirect Speech Conversion Change in Modals Modal verbs are those verbs that are preceded by another verb, which is the main verb. Can, May, and Must are some examples of Modals. Modals that won't change are Could, would, should, ought to, might. While changing direct to indirect speech, the Modals change as below: Can become could May becomes Might Must becomes had to (or) would have to Examples: Direct: She said," She can sing." Indirect: She said that she could sing. Direct: She said," I should cook the lunch