Lesson 2: Reported Speech

When someone’s speech is reported by another person indirectly, it is called a reported or indirect statement. You should remember a number of rules when turning direct statements into indirect statements.

1.1 Using reporting verb ‘said’ or ‘told’ in statements and ‘asked’ in questions

e.g. Direct speech: John said, “I’m very hungry.”
    Reported speech: John said that he was very hungry.

Direct speech: Mary said, “I have got a headache.”
    Reported speech: Mary said that she had got a headache.

1.2 Changing of tenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct statement</th>
<th>Indirect statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>simple present</td>
<td>simple past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present continuous</td>
<td>past continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present perfect</td>
<td>past perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple past</td>
<td>past perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past continuous</td>
<td>past perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past perfect</td>
<td>past perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will / shall</td>
<td>would / should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can</td>
<td>could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>may</td>
<td>might</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must</td>
<td>had to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e.g. “I’m leaving for Japan,” Mr Chan told his children.
    Mr Chan told his children that he was leaving for Japan.

“I had known him for years,” Judy said.
    Judy said that she had known him for years.

“You must work harder,” Miss Cheng said.
    Miss Cheng said that I had to work harder.
Remember
There are several special cases when the tense need not be changed.

a. when the statement is always true
   e.g. “The earth goes round the sun,” Miss Poon told us.
       Miss Poon told us that the earth goes round the sun.

b. when the reporting verb is in the present tense
   e.g. “Winnie is my best friend,” Cherry says.
       Cherry says that Winnie is her best friend.

c. when would, should, ought to and had better are found in the direct statements
   e.g. “I should get up earlier,” Ricky said.
       Ricky said that he should get up earlier.

1.3 Changing of pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct statement</th>
<th>Indirect statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>he, she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>him, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my</td>
<td>his, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mine</td>
<td>his, hers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>us</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>our</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ours</td>
<td>theirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>he, she, they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>his, her, them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your</td>
<td>his, her, their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yours</td>
<td>his, her, theirs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e.g. “I hate eating fish,” Jack said.
   Jack said that he hated eating fish.

“The purse on the table is mine,” Jane said.
   Jane said that the purse on the table was hers.

1.4 Changing the time words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct statement</th>
<th>Indirect statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>now</td>
<td>then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at present</td>
<td>at that time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>today</td>
<td>that day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tonight</td>
<td>that night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yesterday</td>
<td>the day before / the previous day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>last week</td>
<td>the week before / the previous week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ago</td>
<td>before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>later</td>
<td>after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tomorrow</td>
<td>the next day / the following day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the day after tomorrow</td>
<td>in two days’ time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>next week</td>
<td>the next week / the following week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
e.g. “I watched the movie Finding Nemo last night,” Angela said. 
Angela said that she had watched the movie Finding Nemo the night before.

“You should revise your lesson now,” Mrs Fung told Fred. 
Mrs Fung told Fred that he should revise his lesson then.

1.5 Using ‘if’ / ‘whether’ for yes / no questions

e.g. “Are you Japanese?” Anne asked me. 
Anne asked me if / whether I was Japanese.

“Did you see the accident?” the policeman asked Paul. 
The policeman asked Paul if / whether he had seen the accident.

1.6 Taking away ‘do’ / ‘does’

e.g. “What do you think about the news?” my mother asked me. 
My mother asked me what I thought about the news.

“When does the campaign start?” Louis asked Miss Kwong. 
Louis asked Miss Kwong when the campaign started.

1.7 Changing the question mark to a full stop

e.g. “When will you have the exam tomorrow?” my father asked my sister. 
My father asked my sister when she would have the exam tomorrow.

Exercise 1

Choose the correct verbs and pronouns from the brackets.

1. The little girl said to me, “I have lost my doll.”
The little girl told me that ___________ (I / she) ___________ (had lost / lost) her doll.

2. Edward told us that he would meet us outside the restaurant.
Edward said to us, “I ___________ (meet / will meet) ___________ (them / you) outside the restaurant.

3. Mark’s sister said to him, “I am staying back in school for the inter-school debate.”
Mark’s sister told him that ___________ (he / she) ___________ (is staying / was staying) back in school for the inter-school debate.

4. Mum said to Dad, “I need to borrow your car to go to the supermarket.”
Mum told Dad that she ___________ (needs / needed) to borrow ___________ (her / his) car to go to the supermarket.
5. Mr. Smith told the students that he had postponed the English test.
   Mr. Smith said to the students, “_____________ (he / I) _________________ (postpone / have postponed) the English test.”

6. “Tony is bringing some music tapes to the party tonight.” Albert said.
   Albert said that Tony _________________ (was bringing / was brought) some music tapes to the party _________________ (last night / that night).

7. “The Tolo Highway was blocked yesterday,” a taxi-driver said.
   A taxi-driver said that the Tolo Highway _________________ (have blocked / had been blocked) _________________ (the next day / the day before).

8. “Rain will go back to Korea tomorrow,” the newspaper said.
   The newspaper said that Rain _________________ (would go / will be going) back to Korea _________________ (the previous day / the following day).

9. “We will have dinner with your grandmother tonight,” my mother said.
   My mother said that we _________________ (would have / will be having) dinner with ____________ (his / my) grandmother _________________ (at that time / that night).

10. “Do you know how to get to the nearest MTR station?” Bryan asked Michelle.
    Bryan asked Michelle _________________ (whether / where) she _________________ (knows / knew) how to get to the nearest MTR station.

**Exercise 2**
*Fill in the blanks with the correct verb forms, pronouns or words of time.*

1. Susan said, “I go to the gymnasium every morning.”
   Susan said that _________________ to the gymnasium every morning.

2. “I took the children to the zoo last week,” Peter said.
   Peter said that he _________________ the children to the zoo _________________.

3. Mrs Philips said, “John will visit me tomorrow.”
   Mrs Philips said that John _________________ the next day.
4. Dr Jones said that his wife works at the children’s hospital.
   
   Dr Jones said, “__________ wife _________ at the children’s hospital.”

5. Ivan told me that he was going to see his cousin Ray on Saturday.
   
   Ivan said to me, “I ____________ to see __________ cousin Ray on Saturday.”

6. Ricky said, “I will go to Egypt with my wife next week.”
   
   Ricky said that ____________ to Egypt with __________ wife ____________.

7. Jeff asked his father, “Would you give me more pocket money this month, please?”
   
   Jeff asked his father ______________________________ more pocket money that month.

8. Patrick told his students that he was going to teach them some difficult questions the following day.
   
   Patrick told his students, “________________ to teach __________ some difficult questions ______________.”

9. Tina asked her mother whether she could go to the cinema with her friends that night.
   
   “________________ to the cinema with __________ friends ______________?” Tina asked her mother.

10. Olivia asked me if I would like to have dinner with her in two days’ time.
    
    “________________ to have dinner with ____________________________?” Olivia asked me.

**Exercise 3**

*Rewrite the following sentences in reported speech.*

1. “I’m listening to the radio,” Mary said.

   ___________________________

2. “I met Julie in Macau last week,” he said.

   ___________________________

3. “I’ll see you tomorrow,” she said to me.

   ___________________________

4. “I must talk to the Principal,” said the boy’s father.

   ___________________________

5. “I stayed there for a few hours,” she said.

   ___________________________
6. “We have never been to America,” they said.

7. “We were watching television when the telephone rang,” Susan said.

8. “The earth goes round the sun,” he said.

9. “Would you like anything to drink now?” she asked me.

10. “Have you met my brother before?” June asked me.

11. “Did you phone your mother last night?” Andrew asked me.

12. “Do you think I was rude yesterday?” Peter asked Diana.

13. “Would you turn on the air conditioner, please?” the passenger asked the driver.

14. “Have you ever had a job interview?” the teacher asked Joanna.

15. “I can’t understand pop music,” Bonnie said.

16. “Have a cup of coffee,” Mrs. Wong suggested to Jason.

17. “Don’t take off your coat or you will get cold,” his father advised him.

18. “When does the tennis match end?” Frankie asked.

19. “How often do you go to the gymnasium?” Mr. Cheung asked his neighbour.

20. Gloria asked, “May I go to the toilet, please?”