

Direct and Indirect Speech

What is Speech in Grammar?

The way the words of a speaker are expressed is called speech. There are two types of speech:

- **Direct speech**
- **Indirect speech**

Direct Speech

Direct speech is where the exact words of a person are stated.

Characteristics of Direct Speech

- The speech is enclosed within quotation marks.

Leela said, "It is indeed very strange."

- A comma (,) is used to separate the rest of the sentence from the speech in the quotations.

My teacher asked the class, "How many forgot to do their homework?"

- Sometimes, a colon (:) is used instead of the comma. This is done if the quote is formal in nature or is lengthy.

Mikhail Gorbachev said: "Political leaders still think things can be done through force, but that cannot solve terrorism. Backwardness is the breeding ground of terror, and that is what we have to fight."

- The tense of the speech within the quotations will not change no matter when it is spoken.

Jameel says, "I am painting my house blue"
Jameel said yesterday, "I am painting my house blue."
Jameel said three years ago, "I am painting my house blue."

Indirect Speech

Indirect speech is where the words of the speaker are not reported in the exact manner in which they are said.

Characteristics of Direct Speech

- The speech is not enclosed within quotation marks.

Direct speech: Leela said, "It is indeed very strange."
Indirect speech: Leela said that it was indeed very strange.

- The relative pronoun 'that' is used in the sentence instead of the comma.

Direct speech: Smitha said, "My bag is missing!"
Indirect speech: Smitha exclaimed **that** her bag was missing.

- The tense of the statement within the quotations may usually change into the past tense unless the statement is a fact.

Direct speech: Jerome stated, "I bequeath my money to my niece."
Indirect speech: Jerome stated that he bequeathed his money to his niece.

Direct speech: Teacher said, "Jupiter has 63 moons."
Indirect speech: Teacher said that Jupiter has 63 moons.

- The pronouns in the quoted speech will change in indirect speech.

Direct speech: Meena said, "Will you come along?"
Indirect speech: Meena asked if he/she/I would come along.

- The modal auxiliaries may also change in indirect speech.

Direct speech: Krishna said, "I can take care of the business."
Indirect speech: Krishna said that he could take care of the business.

- For imperative and exclamatory sentences, the reported verb changes according to the nature of the sentence.

Direct speech: Ajay said, "Please move along."
Indirect speech: Ajay requested everyone to move along.

Direct speech: Manish said, "Bring me some food to eat."
Indirect speech: Manish ordered that they bring some food for him to eat.

Direct speech: Pankaj said, "What a beautiful car!"
Indirect speech: Pankaj exclaimed that it was a beautiful car.

- Adverbs of time and place change in indirect speech.

Direct speech: Meenal said, "Can I return the book tomorrow?"
Indirect speech: Meenal asked if she could return the book the day after.

Direct speech: She said, "I live here."
Indirect speech: She said that she lived there.

Rules for Tense Change in Indirect Speech

The tense of the verbs in the direct speech may change in indirect speech.

Direct speech	Indirect speech
Simple present tense	Simple past tense
Rita said, "I ride bikes."	Rita said that she rode bikes.
Present continuous tense	Past continuous tense
Frieda said, "I am buying some clothes."	Frieda said that she was buying some clothes.
Present perfect tense	Past perfect tense
He told me, "The dog has been fed."	He told me that the dog has been fed.
Present perfect continuous tense	Past perfect continuous tense
Mala said, "The tap has been running since 9 am."	Mala said that the tap had been running since 9 am.
Simple past tense	Past perfect tense
Gertrude said, "The guests left."	Gertrude said that the guests had left.
Past continuous tense	Past perfect continuous tense
The boy said, "It was raining that night."	The boy said that it had been raining that night.
Past perfect tense	Past perfect tense
Fiona said, "I had called Maria."	Fiona said that she had called Maria.
Simple future tense (will)	Simple future tense (would)
Greg said, "I will arrive by morning."	Greg said that he would arrive by morning.
Future continuous tense (will)	Future continuous tense (would)
He said, "I will be reading a book."	He said that he would be reading a book.
Future perfect tense (will)	Future perfect tense (would)
Jigar said, "I will have finished the work by 3."	Jigar said that he would have finished the work by 3.

Rules for Changing Adverbs in Indirect Speech

Adverbs of place and time change in indirect speech.

Direct speech	Indirect speech
Today	That day/the same day
Usha said, "I will watch a movie today."	Usha said that she would watch a movie that day.
Tomorrow	The day after/the next day
I said, "I will visit my friend tomorrow."	I said that I would visit my friend the day after.
Yesterday	The day before/the previous day
Veena said, "The meeting was held yesterday."	Veena said that the meeting was held the day before.
Next week/month/year	The week/month/year after
She said, "I will arrive next week."	She said that she would arrive the week after.
Last week/month/year	The week/month/year before
They said, "You should have called us last year."	They said that I should have called them the year before.
Ago	Before
He said, "Many years ago, this house was uninhabited."	He said that many years before that house was uninhabited.
Now	Then
Priya said, "I need your files now."	Priya said that she needed my files then.
Here	There
Diana told me, "Stand here."	Diana told me to stand there.
This	That
Geeta said, "I cannot accept this."	Geeta said that she could not accept that.

Rules for Changing Modal Auxiliaries in Indirect Speech

Modal auxiliaries also undergo change when the sentence changes to indirect speech.

Direct speech	Indirect speech
Can	Could
The teacher said to me, "You can submit your assignment tomorrow."	The teacher said to me that I could submit my assignment the day after.
May	Might
Bianca said, "I may visit my parents."	Bianca said that she might visit her parents.
Must	Had to
Fredrick said, "I must call my friend."	Fredrick said that he had to call his friend.

Modals such as **would**, **could**, **might**, **should** and **ought to** will not change in indirect speech.