

48 Reported speech overview

48.1 CHANGING REFERENCES IN REPORTED SPEECH

Certain words have variable reference, which means their meaning is context-dependent. In order to retain the meaning of the direct speech, reported speech usually revises tenses, pronouns, and time references.

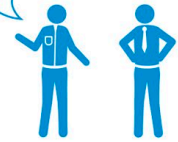


TENSE

I **want** to become a police officer.

The tense usually moves back.

She said she **wanted** to become a police officer.



48.2 REPORTING VERBS IN THE PRESENT TENSE

The reporting verb can be in the present tense. In this case, the tense of the sentence doesn't change.

I don't like ice cream.



She **says** she doesn't like ice cream.

Reporting verb is in the present tense.

The main verb doesn't change tense.



I've never tried ice cream.



She **tells** me she's never tried ice cream.

Using "tell" in the present tense can be more emphatic than "say."



When forming reported speech from direct speech, some words change in order to keep the meaning consistent. Other words stay the same.

See also:

Present simple **1** Past simple **7** Tenses in reported speech **44** Modal verbs **56** Personal pronouns **77**

PRONOUNS



I did well in **my** exams.

She said she did well in **her** exams.

"My" changes to "her" to refer back to the first speaker.



TIME REFERENCES



I'll apply for the job **tomorrow**.

She said she'd apply for the job **the next day**.

"Tomorrow" changes to "the next day" to keep the meaning the same.



48.3 REPORTING MODAL VERBS

Most modal verbs, except for "will" and "can," behave differently from other verbs. No matter what the tense of the direct speech, they don't change in reported speech.

I **might** buy some ice cream.

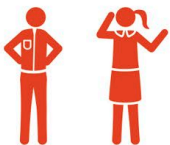


She said she **might** buy some ice cream.

The modal verb is the same as in direct speech.



I **could** have bought one.



She said she **could** have bought one.

The reported verb also doesn't change from direct speech.

