

Direct And Indirect Speech Rules

What is Direct & Indirect Speech?

Direct speech - reporting the message of the speaker in exact words as spoken by him.

Direct speech example: Rama said 'he is busy now'.

Indirect speech: reporting the message of the speaker in our own words

Indirect speech example: Rama said that he was very busy then.

Rules For 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, pronoun, tense, etc. we will take up all the factors one by one.

Rule 1 - Direct To Indirect Speech Conversion - Reporting Verb

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

Direct to indirect speech example:

Direct : she **said**, 'i am happy'

Indirect : She **said** (that) she **was** happy

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

Direct to indirect speech example:

Direct: He said, 'we **cannot live** without air'.

Indirect: He said that we **cannot live** without air.

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

Direct to indirect speech example:

Direct: She says/will say, 'she is going'

Indirect: She says/will say she is going.

Rule 2 - Direct Speech to Indirect Speech conversion - Present Tense

1. **Present Perfect Changes to Past Perfect.**

Direct to indirect speech example:

Direct: "I **have been** to Boston", She told me.

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

2. **Present Continuous Changes to Past Continuous**

Direct to indirect speech example:

Direct: "I **am playing** the guitar", she explained.
Indirect: She explained that she **was playing** the guitar.

3. Present Perfect Changes to Past Perfect

Direct to indirect speech example:

Direct: He said, "she **has finished** her homework".

Indirect: He said that she **had finished** her homework.

4. Simple Present Changes to Simple Past

Direct to indirect speech example:

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

1. Simple Past Changes to Past Perfect

Direct to indirect speech example:

Direct: She said, "Irvin **arrived** on Sunday."

Indirect: She said that Irvin **had arrived** on Sunday.

2. Past Continuous Changes to Past Perfect Continuous

Direct to indirect speech example

Direct: "We **were playing** basketball", they told me.

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

3. Future Changes to Present Conditional

Direct to indirect speech example

Direct: She said, "I **will be** in Scotland tomorrow."

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

4. Future Continuous Changes to Conditional Continuous

Direct to indirect speech example

Direct: He said, "I'll **be disposing** the old computer next Tuesday."

Indirect: He said that he **would be disposing** the old computer next Tuesday.

Rule 4 - Direct Speech to Indirect Speech Conversion - Interrogative Sentences

1. 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 to indirect speech example

Direct: "**Where** do you live?" asked the boy.

Indirect: The boy **enquired where** I lived.

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

Direct to indirect speech example

Direct: She said, '**will** you come for the party'?

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

3. Reporting verbs such as 'said/ said to' changes to enquired, asked, or demanded

Direct to indirect speech example

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 changes like:

1. Can becomes Could
2. May becomes Might
3. Must becomes had to /Would have to

Check the examples:

- 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.
4. There are Modals that **do not change** like (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

1. The **first person** in the direct speech **changes as per the subject** of the speech.
Direct speech to indirect speech examples
Direct: He said, "I am in class Twelfth."
Indirect: He says that he was in class Twelfth.
2. The **second person** of direct speech **changes as per the object** of reporting speech.
Direct speech to indirect speech examples
Direct: She says to them, "You have done your work."
Indirect: She tells them that they have done their work.
3. The **third person** of direct speech **doesn't change**.
Direct speech to indirect speech examples
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

1. Indirect Speech is supported by some verbs like requested, ordered, suggested and advised. Forbid-forbade is used for the negative sentences. Therefore, **the imperative mood in direct speech changes into the Infinitive in indirect speech**.
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.
2. 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 7 - Direct Speech to Indirect Speech Conversion - Punctuations

1. 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."
2. Full stop, Comma, exclamation or question mark, are placed inside the closing inverted commas.
Example: They asked, "Can we sing with you?"
3. **If direct speech comes after the information about who is speaking, 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).

Rule 7 - Direct Speech to Indirect Speech Conversion - Change of Time

1. In direct speeches, the words that express nearness in time or place are changed to words that express distance in indirect speech. Such as :
 - Now becomes then
 - Here becomes there
 - Ago becomes before
 - Thus becomes so
 - Today becomes that day
 - Tomorrow becomes the next day
 - This becomes that
 - Yesterday becomes the day before
 - These becomes those
 - Hither becomes thither
 - Come becomes go
 - Hence becomes thence
 - Next week Or month becomes following week/month

Examples:

Direct: He said, 'His girlfriend came yesterday.'

Indirect: He said that his girlfriend had come the day before.

2. The **time expression does not change** if the **reporting verb is in present tense or future tense**.

Examples:

Direct: He says/will say, 'My girlfriend came yesterday.'

Indirect: He says/will say that his girlfriend had come yesterday.

Online Quiz

Rules for converting Indirect Speech into Direct Speech

The following rules should be followed while converting an indirect speech to direct speech:

1. Use the reporting verb such as (say, said to) in its correct tense.
2. Put a comma before the statement and the first letter of the statement should be in capital letter.
3. Insert question mark, quotation marks, exclamation mark and full stop, based on the mood of the sentence.
4. Remove the conjunctions like (that, to, if or whether) wherever necessary.
5. Where the reporting verb is in past tense in indirect, change it to present tense in the direct speech.
6. Change the past perfect tense either into present perfect tense or past tense as necessary.

Check the examples:

- Indirect: She asked whether she was coming to the prom night.
- Direct: She said to her, "Are you coming to the prom night?"
- Indirect: The girl said that she was happy with her result.
- Direct: The girl said, 'I am happy with my result'

Also, check :

1. [Tenses rules](#)
2. [Conjunctions rules](#)
3. [Prepositions Rules](#)

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