In our speech, we often speak to the other person of some thing that was said to us by somebody. In other words, we often report a speech whether ours or someone else’s. We do this in two ways. We either report the speech exactly as we had heard or said it without making any change. This is called Direct Speech.

**Example:** The girl said to her mother, “My plate is empty.”

Or we may change the sentence that we had heard or said without changing its meaning and then report it. This is called Indirect Speech.

**Example:** The girl said to her mother that her plate was empty.

In the first example, the first part of the sentence which is before the comma, is referred to as reporting verb and the part which is within inverted commas is called the reported speech.

**Note:** While transforming from direct into indirect, we have made several changes in the sentence above:

1. We have removed the comma in the indirect sentence and put that in its place.
2. We have removed the inverted commas of the reported speech.
3. We have changed the my of the reported speech into her.
4. We have not used any capital letter in between the sentence unlike in the direct form where the reported speech always begins with a capital letter.

Now, in order to bring about these changes while converting from direct into indirect or vice-versa, there are several important but simple rules that need to be observed. They are:

1. **Changes in Tense and Verb:** While changing from direct to indirect we have to make different changes regarding tenses, verbs or helping verb. A short list is given below to have a look on those changes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present Indefinite</td>
<td>Past Indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Continuous</td>
<td>Past Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Perfect</td>
<td>Past Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Perfect Continuous</td>
<td>Past Perfect Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Indefinite</td>
<td>Past Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Continuous</td>
<td>Past Perfect Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfect</td>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfect Continuous</td>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(a) If the reporting verb, i.e. the main verb in the first part of the sentence before comma is in the present or the future tense, the tense of the verbs in the reported speech will not change.

   **Examples**
   
   **Direct**: Mummy says, “I shall write a letter.”
   **Indirect**: Mummy says that she will write a letter.

(b) If the reporting verb is in the past tense, the tense of the verbs in the reported speech will be changed into their corresponding past tense.

   **Examples**
   
   **Direct**: The boy said to his friend. “I write everyday.” (Present Indefinite)
   **Indirect**: The boy said to his friend that he wrote everyday. (Past Indefinite)
   **Direct**: He said, “I am going there everyday.” (Present Continuous)
   **Indirect**: He said to the teacher that he was going there everyday. (Past Continuous)

(a) If the reporting verb is in the past tense, the simple past in the reported speech may become the past perfect in the Indirect.

   **Examples**
   
   **Direct**: He said, “The horse died in the night.” (Simple Past)
   **Indirect**: He said that the horse had died in the night. (Past Perfect)
   **Direct**: He said, “The man came at six.” (Simple Past)
   **Indirect**: He said that the man had come at six. (Past Perfect)

(b) If the reporting verb is in the past tense, the past continuous in the reported speech changes into the past perfect continuous.

   **Examples**
   
   **Direct**: He said, “The man was coming.” (Past Continuous)
   **Indirect**: He said that the man had been coming. (Past Perfect Continuous)
   **Direct**: He said, “Rain was falling yesterday.” (Past Continuous)
   **Indirect**: He said that rain had been raining the previous day. (Past Perfect Continuous)

3. **Change of person**: The persons of the pronouns and of the verbs in the reported speech undergo changes when converted into indirect form. Thus:

(a) First person pronouns in the direct reporter speech change according to the subject of the reporting verb. The other changes are given in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ram said I</td>
<td>Ram said that he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“we”</td>
<td>“they”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“my”</td>
<td>“his”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **Direct**: He says, “I am going to Delhi.
   **Indirect**: He says that he is going to Delhi.
   **Direct**: Mummy says, “I will have to go.”
   **Indirect**: Mummy says that she will have to go.

(b) Second person pronouns change according to the noun or pronoun coming after the reporting verbs.

Second person changes to third, if there is no mention of second person in the reporting verb part, so:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your</td>
<td>His/Her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (Plural)</td>
<td>They</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
But if there is mention of you (second person) in the direct speech, you in the indirect speech remains unchanged.

**Examples**

**Direct**
- Ram said to you, “You are a good boy.”

**Indirect**
- Ram said to you that you were a good boy.

So:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (Plural)</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your</td>
<td>Your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your (Plural)</td>
<td>Your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (Object)</td>
<td>You (Object)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples**

**Direct**
- I said to Mohan, “You will have to read.”

**Indirect**
- I said to Mohan that he would have to read.

**Examples**

**Direct**
- Ram said to you, “You are wrong.”

**Indirect**
- Ram said to you that you were wrong.

4. **Said to**: If the reporting verb said to is followed by an object, it is changed into told while converting it into indirect speech.

**Examples**

**Direct**
- She said to her mother, “I have done my work.”

**Indirect**
- She told her mother that she had done her work.

**Examples**

**Direct**
- He said to me, “There is no more water.”

**Indirect**
- He told me that there was no more water.

**Note**: If there is mention of first person in the reporting verb part, then second person in the direct (reported) speech changes to first person, e.g.,

**Direct**
- Ram said to me, “You are a good boy.”

**Indirect**
- Ram told me that I was a good boy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You (Singular)</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (Plural)</td>
<td>We</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your (Singular)</td>
<td>My</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your (Plural)</td>
<td>Our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (Object, Singular)</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (Object, Plural)</td>
<td>Us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. If the reported speech has two actions which are both in the past continuous tense, its tense will not change while converting into indirect speech.

   **Example**
   
   *Direct* : She said, “The cat was running and the dog was chasing it.”
   
   *Indirect* : She said that the cat was running and the dog was chasing it.

Similarly, if the reported speech is in the past tense and indicates time or period, its tense will not change.

   **Example**
   
   *Direct* : She said, “I worked in Delhi for two years.”
   
   *Indirect* : She said that she worked in Delhi for two years.

6. **Must and need not**

   (a) In some cases, must and need not are used in place of have to.

   **Examples**
   
   *Direct* : lie said, “I must go now.”
   
   *Indirect* : He said that he had to go then.

   *Direct* : He said, “I need not go.”
   
   *Indirect* : He said that he will not have to go.

   (b) Must is used in place of shall have to when it expresses necessity or compulsion.

   **Examples**
   
   *Direct* : He said, “I must finish this book on Monday.”
   
   *Indirect* : He said that he would have to finish that book on Monday.

   *Direct* : He said, “I need not write this essay.”
   
   *Indirect* : He said that he would not have to write that essay.

   (b) Must sometimes indicates an order or a command.

   **Note:** But in some sentences when must indicates some kind of advice or suggestion and compulsion; in those sentences must remains must.

   **Example**
   
   *Direct* : The policeman said to us, “You must not cross the road against the red light.”

   *Indirect* : The policeman told us that we must not cross the road against the red light.

7. In the case of interrogative sentences, the following rules need to be observed while changing into Indirect.

   (a) Said to is changed into asked. It can also be changed into enquired or demanded depending on the nature of the sentence.

   (b) If the question in the reported speech begins with a helping verb, i.e. is, am, are, was, were, do, does, did, may, might, can, could, will, would, must, etc., the inverted commas are replaced by if or whether.

   (c) If the question starts with who, whose, when, where, what, which, why, how, no conjunction is used in place of the inverted commas.

   **Examples**
   
   *Direct* : He said to me, “Where are you going?”

   *Indirect* : He asked me where I was going.

   *Direct* : He said to me, “What are you doing?”

   *Indirect* : He asked me what I was doing.

8. **Imperative sentences**

   (a) In the imperative sentence, the sense of order, command, advice, request, entreaty, warning, etc. are conveyed. So, said to changes into ordered, requested, advised, commanded, warned, forbade, etc. depending on the nature of the sentence.
(b) Inverted commas (“”) are replaced by to.
(c) In the sentences of negative imperative, don’t or do not is substituted by not to.
(d) If the imperative sentence starts with let and expresses some proposal or suggestion, said to should be changed into proposed to, or suggested to.

**Examples**

Direct : The master said to the servant, “Post the letter at once.”
Indirect : The master ordered the servant to post the letter at once.
Direct : I said to my son, “Work hard for a better tomorrow.”
Indirect : I advised my son to work hard for a better tomorrow.

9. Some more rules

(i) Said to is changed into wished.
   (In the case of Good morning, Good noon, Good afternoon Good evening, etc.)
(ii) Said to is changed into bade.
   (In case of Good night, Good bye, Farewell, etc.)
(iii) If the sentence expresses some desire (i.e. starts with would that, that if, etc.), said to is changed into wished.
(iv) If the sentence expresses some wish or prayer (i.e. starts with May - -! or May God —!), said to is changed into wished or prayed.
(v) If an exclamatory sentence expresses sorrow, grief or pain, said to is changed to exclaimed with sorrow that or exclaimed with grief that, etc.
(vi) Said to is changed to exclaimed with joy that or exclaimed joyfully that, etc., if an exclamatory sentence expresses joy.
(vii) Said to is changed to applauded saying/telling, calling out that, etc. (In case of exclamatory sentences expressing approval)

**Examples**

Direct : He said to me, “Good morning.”
Indirect : He wished me good morning.
Direct : The boy said, “If I could win this game.”
Indirect : The boy wished that he could win this game.
Direct : She said to him, “May God grant you success in the examination.”
Indirect : She prayed that God might grant him success in the examination.