ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Direct and indirect speech

Difficulty level: Advanced

English, Literacy, and Communication

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Overview of the concept

This is how you report what someone said, either in their exact words or in your own. You quote a friend word for word when their exact words matter, like in a story or an interview. You summarise what a teacher told you when the meaning matters more than the wording. Knowing which one to use keeps your writing accurate and honest about what was really said.



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Rule

Direct and indirect speech: direct speech gives the exact words in quotation marks. Indirect speech reports what was said in your own words, with no quotation marks.

To change direct speech to indirect speech, remove the quotation marks, add that, shift the tense back, and change the pronouns. To change back, put the exact words in quotation marks and shift the tense forward.

Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Change to indirect speech: Sara said, 'I am tired.'

SOLUTION

Remove the quotation marks and add 'that'.

Shift the tense back: 'am' becomes 'was'. Change 'I' to 'she'.

So: Sara said that she was tired.

EXAMPLE 2

Q Change to direct speech: Tom said that he would come.

SOLUTION

Put Tom's exact words in quotation marks.

Shift the tense forward: 'would come' becomes 'will come'. Change 'he' to 'I'.

So: Tom said, 'I will come.'

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Practice questions

1 Change to indirect: Ana said, 'I like apples.'

- **A** Ana said that she likes apples.
- **B** Ana said that she like apples.
- **C** Ana said that she liked apples.
- **D** Ana said that he liked apples.

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2 Change to direct: Ben said that he was happy.

- **A** Ben said, 'I am happy.'
- **B** Ben said, 'I was happy.'
- **C** Ben said, 'I were happy.'
- **D** Ben said, 'He is happy.'

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3 Change to indirect: He said, 'We are leaving.'

- A He said that they are leaving.
- B He said that they were leave.
- C He said that we were leaving.
- D He said that they were leaving.

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4 Change to direct: She said that she had finished.

- A She said, 'I had finished.'
- B She said, 'I have finished.'
- C She said, 'I has finished.'
- D She said, 'She has finished.'

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5 Change to indirect: Tom said, 'I can swim.'

A Tom said that he can swim.

B Tom said that he can swam.

C Tom said that he could swim.

D Tom said that they could swim.

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6 Change to direct: Sara said that she could swim.

A Sara said, 'I can swim.'

B Sara said, 'I could swim.'

C Sara said, 'I can swam.'

D Sara said, 'She can swim.'

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7 Change to indirect: Mia said, 'It is raining.'

A Mia said that it is raining.

B Mia said that it was raining.

C Mia said that it were raining.

D Mia said that she was raining.

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8 Change to direct: He said that he would help.

A He said, 'I would help.'

B He said, 'I would helped.'

C He said, 'They will help.'

D He said, 'I will help.'

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9 Change to indirect: They said, 'We will come tomorrow.'

- **A** They said that they will come tomorrow.
- **B** They said that they would came the next day.
- **C** They said that they would come the next day.
- **D** They said that we would come the next day.

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10 Change to direct: Ana said that she was reading.

- **A** Ana said, 'I am reading.'
- **B** Ana said, 'I was reading.'
- **C** Ana said, 'I were reading.'
- **D** Ana said, 'She is reading.'

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ANSWER KEY

1. Ana said that she liked apples.

2. Ben said, 'I am happy.'

3. He said that they were leaving.

4. She said, 'I have finished.'

5. Tom said that he could swim.

6. Sara said, 'I can swim.'

7. Mia said that it was raining.

8. He said, 'I will help.'

9. They said that they would come the next day.

10. Ana said, 'I am reading.'

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