

# Indirect Speech: Overview

**USE:** Direct speech is the exact words that someone said. Indirect speech is a report of what someone said. We use indirect speech (also known as reported speech) when we are interested in WHAT someone has said, not in their exact words. It is used in news reports, to retell stories and in any situation in which we talk or write about what we heard or read.

**FORM:** To make indirect speech, we often have to change the verb tenses in the direct speech. We often use the words “said” and “told” to report on the conversation.

**Verb tenses that usually change:**

- Simple present changes to simple past  
*She said “I don’t like action movies.” She said she didn’t like action movies.*
- Auxiliary verbs in the present change to the past  
*She said, “I have never done that.” She said she had never done that.*
- Simple past changes to past perfect  
*She said, “I went to the movies.” She said she had been to the movies.*
- Auxiliary verbs in the simple past change to past perfect  
*She said, “I was waiting for Mark.” She said she had been waiting for Mark.*
- The modal verbs can, may and must change to could, might and had to respectively  
*She said, “I can go tonight.” She said she could go tonight.*
- Auxiliary verbs in the future change to the past  
*She said, “I will meet you tomorrow.” She said she would meet you tomorrow.*

**Verb tenses that don’t have to change:**

- The past perfect  
*She said, “He had already left when I arrived.” She said that he had already left when she arrived.*
- The modal verbs *could, might, ought, should and would*  
*She said, “You ought to eat more meat.” She said that I ought to eat more meat.*

Rewrite the following **DIRECT SPEECH** statements into **INDIRECT** statements. Start each sentence with “She said”.

1. “I haven’t seen the last Star Wars film, but you can ask Bob. He has seen it.”

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2. “What could I have done? I had no choice!”

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Intermediate 3 – Exercise 24 – Indirect Speech: Overview

3. “If they had left on time they would have arrived already!”

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4. “Has Sue finished that report yet?”

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5. “Claudia was the last person in the office, so she must have forgotten to turn on the alarm when she left.”

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6. “The dog was crying. His owner was away on vacation.”

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7. “He gave me a diamond ring! He asked me to marry him.”

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8. “What a beautiful day! I think I will go swimming.”

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*Change the following story into INDIRECT speech. Start with “He said”.*

“I went up to my friend’s cottage for the weekend. Their cottage, a log cabin, is on the edge of a lake. The lake was completely frozen. The ice was over two feet thick. We went snowshoeing. We walked across the lake to an island. Then we walked across the island, through a forest. The snow shoes were a bit difficult to use, but after a while, it felt just like walking anywhere. You should try it. It was really fun.”

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