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Quick and Handy Grammar Review: Direct and Reported Speech

Direct Speech

We rarely write *direct speech* unless we include dialogue or quoted speech in our work. Of course, we read *direct speech* all the time, both in newspaper quotations and in novels and short stories where the characters speak to each other.

Punctuating Direct Speech

When the quoted speech goes at the end of the sentence:

1. Place a comma after the subject and reporting verb (*said, commented, added, explained, yelled, etc.*).
2. Insert the first set of quotation marks.
3. Begin the sentence or phrase inside the quotation marks with a capital letter.
4. Place the correct punctuation (*period, question mark, exclamation point, etc.*) at the end of the sentence.
5. Insert the second set of quotation marks *after* the punctuation.

The doctor said, "Take your medicine every day."

The professor said, "We will have a test tomorrow afternoon."

The candidate commented, "I have always been honest."

Victor asked, "Why do you always come late?"

The coach screamed, "You have to play harder than this!"

When the quoted speech begins the sentence:

1. Begin with the first set of quotation marks.
2. Capitalize the first letter of the sentence.
3. At the end of the sentence, place a comma, question mark, or exclamation mark (**not a period**).
4. Insert the second set of quotation marks *after* the comma.
5. Insert the subject and reporting verb, and end the sentence with a period.

"I have always loved you," Kil Yi whispered.

"Take your bags and report to section five!" the sergeant screamed.

"Why do you always bother me?" the trainer asked.

"Please don't take my pocketbook," Laura pleaded.

"Those roses are fantastic!" Emily exclaimed.

When the quoted speech is split by the subject and verb:

1. Begin with the first set of quotation marks.
2. Capitalize the first letter of the sentence.
3. At the end of the first part of the quote, place a comma and quotation marks.
4. Insert the subject and reporting verb, and follow the verb with a comma.
5. Include another set of quotation marks and begin the second part of the quote with the lower case.
6. Punctuate the end of the sentence.
7. Include the second set of quotation marks.

“I think,” Bob commented, “that this is the worst day of my life.”
 “Could you please explain,” Karen asked, “why you are always so rude?”
 “I really feel,” Victoria said, “that you are 100% wrong.”
 “Pick up your registration forms in Room 122,” the counselor stated, “and go to the gym with your ID.”
 “I have never stolen anything,” Fred said, “and I have never lied, either.”

Indirect or Reported Speech

While we rarely employ *direct speech*, we use *reported speech* every day. In fact, *reported speech* is one of the most common forms in grammar. There are strict rules for the sequence of tenses. In general, in moving from *direct speech* to *reported speech*, the tense is changed *one step backwards* (to the past). Notable exceptions are the *simple future* (which becomes *conditional* in reported speech) and *imperatives* (which become *infinitives* in reported speech). The relative pronoun *that* used after the reporting verb is **optional**, but **commonly used**. (E.g., Margo said **that** she would call me after breakfast tomorrow.)

Direct speech tense	Reported speech tense	Example
Simple present	Simple past	“I love you.” = She said that she loved me.
Present progressive	Past progressive	“I am going to the party.” = She said that she was going to the party.
Present perfect	Past perfect	“I have eaten already.” = She said that she had eaten already.
Simple past	Past perfect	“I bought a new coat.” = She said that she had bought a new coat.
Past progressive	Past perfect progressive	“I was sleeping at that time.” = She said that she had been sleeping at that time.
Simple future	Conditional	“You will have a test next Thursday.” = The professor said that we would have a test next Thursday
Future progressive	Conditional progressive	“I will be traveling to Spain next month.” = She said that she would be traveling to Spain next month.
Can (present modal of ability)	Could	“You can eat whatever you want.” = The doctor said that I could eat whatever I wanted.
Imperative	Infinitive	“ Eat your vegetables.” = My mother told me to eat my vegetables.

Grammar notes:

- In spoken grammar, the simple present is sometimes reported in the simple present when the action has just occurred or if the statement is a well-known fact. (E.g., Ruth **says** that she **loves** me.)
- Sometimes, in predictions, the reporting verb is in the future and the other clause is in the simple present. (E.g., My mother **will say** that she **is** too sick to go.)
- Use *said* without a direct object. (E.g., Jim **said** that he **was coming**.)
- Use *told* with a direct object. (E.g., The teacher **told me** to come early.)
- In reporting imperatives (commands), remember to use the correct negative infinitive form (not + infinitive). (E.g., Rosita **told me not to eat** the cake before dinner.)

Exercise 1:

Punctuate the following sentences. Use direct speech. Use capital letters where necessary.

1. John said I am very happy to meet you

2. The doctor said you should cut down on your salt intake

3. Natasha explained I am here to learn not to fool around

4. Pack your bags and get out of here screamed the landlord

5. I believe Toshiko said that you are holding my bag

6. Could you tell me how to get to Route 17 Atsuko asked

7. The fastest way out is through the library Robert explained

8. The professor said we will have a test on Friday

9. Boris yelled where are my new shoes

10. I think that you are wrong Oleg stated and I also feel that you don't understand the subject at all

Exercise 2:

Error correction. Underline one or more mistakes in each sentence, and write the correct sentences below.

1. "I will come on time." the doctor said.

2. "Do you love me" Russel asked.

3. "I will never leave you." Paula explained. "And I will always be there for you."

4. Cynthia said, "Please tell me what to do".

5. Bob exclaimed You just stole my wallet.

6. "Could you please. Maria asked, "Tell me where is the library."

7. Boomer said my parents are leaving right now.

8. "Where are my shoes Bill asked.

9. Hee Won said i am sorry to hear about that".

10. Grandpa always said always to dress nicely the first time you meet someone.

Exercise 3:

Change the sentences with reported speech to sentences with direct speech.

1. The professor said that he would correct the tests on Saturday.

2. Natalia asked where the cafeteria was.

3. The doctor explained that he would operate tomorrow.

4. My mother said that she was tired.

5. Greta told me not to leave so early.

6. Mark said that he could speak four languages.

7. Shirley told me to take notes in biology class.

8. My sister said that we would leave early Sunday morning.

9. Hideyuki explained that he was feeling sick.

10. Harold asked why I was wearing such old clothes.

Exercise 4:

Report these sentences, beginning with “Olga said that...”

1. “We will leave at six.”
Olga said that _____.

2. “Tomorrow will be a special day.”
Olga said that _____.

3. “I will go to the movies tonight.”
Olga said that _____.

4. “Letitia will definitely come to the party.”
Olga said that _____.

5. “I will not come with you to the dinner.”
Olga said that _____.

6. “It will probably rain tomorrow.”
Olga said that _____.

7. “Paul won’t remember to call me later.”
Olga said that _____.

8. “Henrietta will arrive after Hanna.”
Olga said that _____.

9. “Juan will never do it on time.”
Olga said that _____.

10. “I will buy a new pair of shoes for the dance.”
Olga said that _____.

Exercise 5:

Report these sentences, beginning with “The professor said that...”

Use “The professor told us...” with infinitives.

1. “We will have a test tomorrow.”

2. “We are going to study conditionals next.”

3. “Study hard this week!”

4. “The exam is easy.”

5. “You should bring a dictionary to the next class.”

6. “Don’t cheat!”

7. “Leave when you are finished.”

8. “I am going to correct the tests tomorrow.”

9. “You can take the tests home.”

10. “The class will end on Wednesday, August 7.”

Exercise 6:

Error correction. Underline one or more mistakes in each sentence, and write the correct sentences below.

1. 1. Rosa said that she will come early to the meeting.

2. The doctor said me not eat so much beef.

3. Olivia told that she will be late tomorrow evening.

4. The counselor told me not take any more literature classes.

5. Maria Pia said that she is not going to Colombia this year.

6. Kil Yi said he is gonna leave at six.

7. Victor said never to cheat on exams.

8. Isabella said me that she will not never marry me.

9. My mother told me cook dinner myself.

10. Elise said that she has eat already.

Exercise 7:

Choose the correct answer.

1. "I can't drive a truck," Bill said. Bill said that _____.
a. he couldn't drive a truck b. couldn't he drive a truck

2. "Where does Piadora live?" Carmine asked. Carmine asked _____.
a. where does Piadora live b. where Piadora lives

3. "You will have another chance to raise your grade," the professor said. The professor said that _____.
a. we will have another chance to raise our grades
b. we would have another chance to raise our grades

4. "You can stop taking those pills," the doctor explained. The doctor explained that I _____.
a. could stop taking those pills b. can stop taking those pills

5. "Get out of here!" the clerk told me. The clerk told me _____.
a. to get out of here b. that should I get out of here

6. "Why don't you love me anymore?" Samantha asked. Samantha asked me _____.
a. why didn't I love her anymore. b. why I didn't love her anymore

7. "I am going to go to Montreal on Sunday," Jesse said. Jesse said _____.
a. that she was going to go to Montreal on Sunday.
b. that she is going to go to Montreal on Sunday.

8. "Is that your coat?" Gee asked. Gee asked me _____.
a. if that was my coat b. if that is my coat

9. "Can you help me?" Irina asked. Irina asked me _____.
a. if I can help her b. if I could help her

10. "Where do you come from?" Ned asked. Ned asked _____.
a. where do I come from b. where I came from

Exercise 8:

Change the sentences with direct speech to sentences with reported speech. Pay particular attention to the verb tenses.

1. "You can play the piano well." John said that I...

2. "Leave when you finish the test." The teacher told us...

3. "I am not going to eat the whole chicken." Carlos said that he...

4. "Don't take the last one." My mother told me...

5. "The painter will begin work on Monday." My brother explained that...

6. "Don't speed anymore!" the police officer said. The police officer told me...

7. "You should study the past tense," the teacher said. The teacher said that...

8. "Cut the grass after lunch." My father told me...

9. "I am going to Philadelphia in May." Bob said that he...

10. "Ranklin will win the election." The governor predicted that...

Answer Key

Exercise 1: Punctuate the following sentences.

1. John said, "I am very happy to meet you."
2. The doctor said, "You should cut down on your salt intake."
3. Natasha explained, "I am here to learn, not to fool around."
4. "Pack your bags and get out of here," screamed the landlord.
5. "I believe," Toshiko said, "that you are holding my bag."
6. "Could you tell me how to get to Route 17?" Atsuko asked.
7. "The fastest way out is through the library," Robert explained.
8. The professor said, "We will have a test on Friday."
9. Boris yelled, "Where are my new shoes?"
10. "I think that you are wrong," Oleg stated, "and I also feel that you don't understand the subject at all."

Exercise 2: Error correction.

1. "I will come on time," the doctor said.
2. "Do you love me?" Russel asked.
3. "I will never leave you," Paula explained, "and I will always be there for you."
4. Cynthia said, "Please tell me what to do."
5. Bob exclaimed, "You just stole my wallet!"
6. "Could you please," Maria asked, "tell me where the library is?"
7. Boomer said, "My parents are leaving right now."
8. "Where are my shoes?" Bill asked.
9. Hee Won said, "I am sorry to hear about that."
10. Grandpa always said, "Always dress nicely the first time you meet someone."

Exercise 3: Change the sentences with reported speech to sentences with direct speech.

1. The professor said, "I will correct the tests on Saturday."
2. Natalia asked, "Where is the cafeteria?"
3. The doctor explained, "I will operate tomorrow."
4. My mother said, "I am tired."
5. Greta told me, "Don't leave so early."
6. Mark said, "I can speak four languages."
7. Shirley told me, "Take notes in biology class."
8. My sister said, "We will leave early Sunday morning."
9. Hideyuki explained, "I am feeling sick."
10. Harold asked, "Why are you wearing such old clothes?"

Exercise 4: Report these sentences, beginning with "Olga said that..."

1. Olga said that we would leave at six.
2. Olga said that tomorrow would be a special day.
3. Olga said that she would go to the movies tonight.
4. Olga said that Letitia would definitely come to the party.
5. Olga said that she would not come with me to the dinner.
6. Olga said that it would probably rain tomorrow.
7. Olga said that Paul would not remember to call her later.
8. Olga said that Henrietta would arrive after Hanna.
9. Olga said that Juan would never do it on time.
10. Olga said that she would buy a new pair of shoes for the dance."

Exercise 5: Report these sentences, beginning with "The professor said that..."

1. The professor said that we would have a test tomorrow.
2. The professor said that we were going to study conditionals next.
3. The professor told us to study hard this week.
4. The professor said that the exam was easy.
5. The professor said that we should bring a dictionary to the next class.
6. The professor told us not to cheat.
7. The professor told us to leave when we were finished.
8. The professor said that she was going to correct the tests tomorrow.
9. The professor said that we could take the tests home.
10. The professor said that the class would end on Wednesday, August 7.

Exercise 6: Error correction.

1. Rosa said that she will come early to the meeting. **Rosa said that she would come early to the meeting.**
2. The doctor said me not eat so much beef. **The doctor told me not to eat so much beef.**
3. Olivia told that she will be late tomorrow evening. **Olivia said that she would be late tomorrow evening.**
4. The counselor told me not take any more literature classes. **The counselor told me not to take any more literature classes.**
5. Maria Pia said that she is not going to Colombia this year. **Maria Pia said that she was not going to Colombia this year.**
6. Kil Yi said he is gonna leave at six. **Kil Yi said he was going to leave at six.**
7. Victor said never to cheat on exams. **Victor said to never cheat on exams.**
8. Isabella said me that she will not never marry me. **Isabella told me that she would never marry me.**
9. My mother told me cook dinner myself. **My mother told me to cook dinner myself.**
10. Elise said that she has eat already. **Elise said that she had eaten already.**

Exercise 7: Choose the correct answer.

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. A | 2. B | 3. B | 4. A | 5. A |
| 6. B | 7. A | 8. A | 9. B | 10. B |

Exercise 8: Change the sentences with direct speech to sentences with reported speech.

1. "You can play the piano well." John said that I **could play the piano well.**
2. "Leave when you finish the test." The teacher told us **to leave when we finished the test.**
3. "I am not going to eat the whole chicken." Carlos said that he **was not going to eat the whole chicken.**
4. "Don't take the last one." My mother told me **not to take the last one.**
5. "The painter will begin work on Monday." My brother explained that **the painter would begin work on Monday.**
6. "Don't speed anymore!" the police officer said. The police officer told me **not to speed anymore.**
7. "You should study the past tense," the teacher said. The teacher said that **I/we should study the past tense.**
8. "Cut the grass after lunch." My father told me **to cut the grass after lunch.**
9. "I am going to Philadelphia in May." Bob said that he **was going to Philadelphia in May.**
10. "Ranklin will win the election." The governor predicted that **Ranklin would win the election.**

Spelling Note: This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Counselor* and *Traveling*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Counsellor* and *Travelling*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.