

TENSE CHANGE IN REPORTED SPEECH

1 We do not change the tense of the original words in reported speech when:

·the reporting verb is in a present tense

→He **says** that intelligent life in the universe does not exist.

·the direct speech includes an unreal past

'I wish I were younger'

→Janice said that she wished she were younger.

~~Janice said that she wished she had been younger~~

2 We can choose to change the tense or not. This often depends on the relationship of the reported event to the time of reporting it.

For example, if we report:

'I'm going on holiday tomorrow morning'

on the day it is said, we are likely to say:

→Susanna said she's going on holiday tomorrow morning,

But reported a few days later, we are more likely to say:

→Susanna said she was going on holiday the next morning.

3 We don't usually change the tense when:

·the action in the indirect speech is still happening or going to happen

'I'm working on the details of a tentative settlement'

→The negotiator said he is working on the details of a tentative settlement. (He is still working on the details)

· The reported verb expresses a fact or situation that cannot or is unlikely to change:

→He explained that these animals roamed the Earth millions of years ago.

→He told us that counselling is not the answer for everyone.

·The verb comes after a time conjunction, e.g. when, after

→Martin replied that he had started the job immediately after he left school.

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* Note that in all of these cases, it is also possible to change the tense

REPORTING VERBS

1 Verb only

'I'm really sorry.'
→ She apologised.

agree, apologise, refuse

2 Verb + (that) clause

'I hacked into the company's accounts system.'
→ He admitted (that) he had hacked into the company's accounts system.

accept, acknowledge, add, admit, advise, agree, announce, answer*, argue, assert, assume, believe, boast, comment, complain, concede, conclude, confess, continue*, decide, declare, deny, doubt, exclaim, expect, explain, foresee, imagine, imply, insist, know, mention, notice, observe, point out, predict, promise, protest, recommend, remark, repeat, reply*, report, respond, reveal, say, shout*, state, suggest, vow, whisper
(* = that is obligatory)

3 Verb + object + that clause

'Don't worry. You'll arrive on time.'
→ She reassured me that I would arrive on time.

advise, assure, inform, reassure, remind, tell, warn

4 Verb + to infinitive

'We'll pick up the children, if you like.'
→ They offered to pick up the children.

agree, demand, guarantee, offer, propose, refuse, swear, threaten, volunteer, vow

5 verb (+ optional object) + to infinitive

'Please can I use the car?'
→ She asked to use the car
'Please let me stay.'
→ She begged us to let her stay.

ask (sb), beg (sb), expect (sb), promise (sb)

6 Verb + object + to + infinitive

'You shouldn't say anything.'
→ I advised him not to say anything.

advise, allow, challenge, command, compel, encourage, expect, forbid, force, implore, instruct, invite, order, permit, persuade, remind, request, tell, urge, warn

7 Verb + object + to + infinitive + complement

'Muhammad Ali was the greatest boxer ever.'
→ She considers Muhammad Ali to have been the greatest boxer ever.

acknowledge, assume, believe, claim, consider, declare, expect, feel, find, presume, suppose, think, understand

8 Verb + -ing form

'I didn't do it.'
→ He denied doing it.

admit, apologise for, decide on, deny, mention, recommend, regret, report, suggest

9 Verb + object + preposition + -ing form

'You forged the cheques, didn't you?'
→ They accused me of forging the cheques.

accuse sb of, blame sb for, congratulate sb on, thank sb for