This activity has been designed for advanced ESL students as a grammar review of how to change direct speech to reported speech. Students should have already been exposed to this grammar point. This activity contains a grammar review sheet, a pre-quiz, detailed teacher’s notes, 36 two-sided flash cards, and a final quiz.

This activity was designed to:
- review the formation and use of reported speech
- practice the grammar structure in a meaningful way
- encourage group interaction and discussions
- increase individual student’s speaking time during class
- reinforce grammar using humorous comics and photos
- expose students to new vocabulary and expressions

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Flash Card Activity: Photo copy sheets 1A & 1B back to back. Then, cut along the dotted line to make cards.

Why do people say “heads up” when they should say “duck?”

The duck questioned ...

Slow down, please!
Ok, I’m slowing up.

Jane told the driver ...
The driver responded ...

It started when I began smoking.

Max said ...

Don’t worry because I’m here for you.

Cindy told her brother ...

Who was that fantastic man?

Sally asked ...

We may be a little late for dinner.

Jerry said ...

Would you like to go out on a date sometime?

Ken asked Pearl ...
Pearl told Ken ...

Not really.

I was talking to you!

Lucy said ...

How come you stopped calling?

Smiley asked ...

I had to chop the tree down before chopping it up.

Bucky the beaver said ...

Didn’t you understand?

The boss asked the trainee ...
The trainee said ...

No, I didn’t.

I didn’t attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it.

Mark Twain said ...

Mark Twain
Humorist
1835-1910
The duck questioned why people say "heads up" when they should say "duck."

Max said (that) it had started when he had begun smoking.

Jane told the driver to slow down. The driver responded (that) he was slowing up.

The boss asked the trainee if she had understood. The trainee said that she hadn't (understood).

The duck questioned why people say "heads up" when they should say "duck."

Max said (that) it had started when he had begun smoking.

Jane told the driver to slow down. The driver responded (that) he was slowing up.

The boss asked the trainee if she had understood. The trainee said that she hadn't (understood).

Bucky the beaver said that he had had to chop the tree down before chopping it up.

Sally asked who that fantastic man was.

Cindy told her brother (that) she was here for him.

Jerry said that they might be a little late for dinner.

Smiley asked how come (why) I/we had stopped calling.

Lucy said that she had been talking to me/us.

Ken asked Pearl if she would like to go out on a date sometimes. Pearl told Ken (that) she really wouldn’t.

Mark Twain said that he hadn’t attended the funeral, but he had sent a nice letter saying that he had approved of it.
Emily asked her brother...
Then, she said...
Can I borrow a dollar?
I'll pay you back tomorrow.

Jim said...
I practiced before the game started.

We were told...

We asked...

The first ant asked...

The second ant said...

Say you love me!

You love me...

May I hold your hand?

No thanks, it isn't heavy.

If we become engaged, will you give me a ring?

What's your phone number?

I love you and I would die for you!

How soon would that be?

James said...

Carol asked...

The waitress asked...

The customer asked...

Leave it alone, and let the bee be.

Ella told Andy...

Flash Card Activity: Photo copy sheets 2A & 2B back to back. Then, cut along the dotted line to make cards.

I was thinking about you.

I have a sore throat, and I'm a little hoarse.

That's funny. You don't look like a horse.

The boy said... The horse said...

Betty asked...

Billy asked...

Jeff asked...

Beth told him...

Jill told Jack...

Jack told Jill...

I practiced before the game started.

What does this word mean?

It means "danger."

Why is the little boy ant confused?

Because all of his uncles are aunts!

What does this word mean?

It means "danger."

What color do you have?

What other colors do you have?

Leave it alone, and let the bee be.

Ella told Andy...

I have a sore throat, and I'm a little hoarse.

That's funny. You don't look like a horse.

The boy said... The horse said...

I was thinking about you.

I love you and I would die for you!

How soon would that be?

James said...

Carol asked...

The waitress asked...

The customer asked...

Leave it alone, and let the bee be.

Ella told Andy...

Flash Card Activity: Photo copy sheets 2A & 2B back to back. Then, cut along the dotted line to make cards.

I was thinking about you.

Emily asked her brother...
Then, she said...
Can I borrow a dollar?
I'll pay you back tomorrow.
The first ant asked why the little boy ant was confused.

The second ant answered (that) all his uncles were aunts!

Betty asked Billy if they became engaged, would he give her a ring.

Billy asked what her phone number was.

Ella told Andy to leave it (the bee) alone and (to) let the bee be.

The boy said that he had a sore throat, and that he (the boy) was a little hoarse.

The horse said (that) that was funny and (that) he (the boy) didn't look like a horse.

We asked what this word meant.

We were told (that) it meant “danger.”

Jeff asked her (Beth) if he might hold her hand.

Beth told him no and that it (her hand) wasn't heavy.

The waitress asked the customer if he would like his coffee black.

The customer asked what other colors she (the waitress) had.

The waitress asked the customer if he would like his coffee black.

The customer asked what other colors she (the waitress) had.

James said that he loved her (Carol) and he would die for her.

Carol asked how soon that would be.

Emily asked her brother if she could borrow a dollar.

Then, she said that she would pay him back the next/following day.
Have you ever read about a psychic winning the lottery?
The psychic asked ...

What's the difference between “partly cloudy” and “partly sunny?”
Paul asked himself ...

What is a “free” gift?
Aren’t all gifts free?
Mira asked ... Moe asked ...

My girlfriend is indescribable.
Jim asked ...

Isn’t that describing her?
Albert said ...

HALLOWEEN CONTEST

Which witch do you like best?
The witch asked ...

I arrived at two to two.
Frick said ...

I got here at two to two, too.
Frack said ...

Have you ever had a nickname?
Mom said ...

Never had one.
Billy told her ...

Practice makes perfect.
Joey asked ...

Nobody's perfect.
Mom said ...

Then why should I practice?
Tom said ...

I haven't seen Julie lately.
Neither have I.
Pam added ...

Could you help me?
Buddy asked ...

I would if I could, but I can’t so I won’t.
Princess replied ...

You must help us if we’re gonna survive.
The orangutang said ...

Would you mind not staring at me!?
Max told us ...
Indirect Speech

Mira asked what a “free” grift was.
Moe asked if all gifts weren’t free.

Indirect Speech

Paul asked himself what the difference between “partly cloudy” and “partly sunny” was.
The psychic asked if I/we had ever heard about a psychic winning the lottery.

Indirect Speech

Frick said (that) he had arrived at two to two.
Frack said (that) he had gotten there at two to two, too.

Indirect Speech

The witch asked which witch I/we liked best.
Albert said that his girlfriend was indescribable.
Jim asked if that wasn’t describing her.

Indirect Speech

Mom said that practice makes perfect.
Billy told her that nobody was perfect.
Joey asked why he should practice.

Indirect Speech

Kim asked Nick if he had ever had a nickname.
Nick said that he had never had one.

Indirect Speech

Max asked us if we would mind not staring at him.
The orangutang said that we had to help them if they were going to survive.
Buddy asked (Princess) if she could help him.
Princess replied that she would if she could, but she couldn’t so she wouldn’t.
Pre-Quiz: Reported Speech

**Directions:** Work with a partner. Fold the sheet in half along the dotted line. Discuss the sentences below and change them from direct to reported speech. Use the verbs said, asked, or told. Begin each sentence with “Jim said, told, asked ...” Then, unfold your sheet and check your answer. See the examples below.

### Direct speech
- I like to play basketball.

**Reported speech**
- Nick said that he liked to play basketball.

### Direct question
- Do you have a nickname?

**Reported speech**
- Nick asked if he had a nickname.

### Polite request
- Don’t be late for the game.

**Reported speech**
- Nick told Jill not to be late for the game.

1. Nick plays basketball.
2. Nick is playing basketball.
3. Nick played basketball.
4. Nick has played basketball.
5. Nick was playing basketball.
6. Nick had been playing basketball.
7. Nick had played basketball.
8. Nick will play basketball.
9. Nick can play basketball.
10. Nick must play basketball.
11. Nick should play basketball.
12. Nick may play basketball.
15. Jill, would you go to the game with me?
16. Do you like basketball?
17. Please don’t be late!
18. Could you sit with me, please?
19. Hurry up, Jill!
20. Don’t be late, Jill!

1. Nick said (that) he played basketball.
2. Nick said (that) he was playing basketball.
3. Nick said (that) he had played basketball.
4. Nick said (that) he had played basketball.
5. Nick said (that) he had been playing basketball.
6. Nick said (that) he had been playing basketball.
7. Nick said (that) he had played basketball.
8. Nick said (that) he would play basketball.
9. Nick said (that) he could play basketball.
10. Nick said (that) he had to play basketball.
11. Nick said (that) he should play basketball.
12. Nick said (that) he may/might play basketball.
13. Nick said (that) he might play basketball.
14. Nick said (that) he ought to practice.
15. Nick asked if she would go to the game with him.
16. Nick asked if Jill liked basketball?
17. Nick told Jill not to be late.
18. Nick asked Jill to sit with him.
19. Nick told Jill to hurry up.
20. Nick told Jill not to be late.
Grammar Review: Reported Speech

In reported speech, we usually report what was said at a different time, and so we change the tense to reflect a past time. We use a reporting verb like say and tell.

**Direct speech**

I like to play basketball.

**Reported later**

Nick said that he liked to play basketball.

Here are some examples of tense changes:

### Simple Present

**Direct**

Nick plays basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said (that) Nick played basketball.

### Present Continuous

**Direct**

Nick is playing basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said that Nick was playing basketball.

### Simple Past

**Direct**

Nick played basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said that Nick had played basketball.

### Present Perfect

**Direct**

Nick has played basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said that Nick had played basketball.

### Past Continuous

**Direct**

Nick was playing basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said that Nick had been playing basketball.

### Present Perfect Continuous (no change)

**Direct**

Nick had been playing basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said that Nick had been playing basketball.

### Past Perfect (no change)

**Direct**

Nick had played basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said (that) Nick had played basketball.

### Future

**Direct**

Nick will play basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said (that) Nick would play basketball.

### Can

**Direct**

Nick can play basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said (that) Nick could play basketball.

### Must

**Direct**

Nick must play basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said (that) Nick had to play basketball.

### Pronoun Changes

Sometimes we need to change the pronouns such as "I" to "he," for example. We also may need to change words like "my," "his," "her," and "your." Also change words about place and time.

**Direct**

I played with my friend last week.

**Reported**

Nick said (that) he had played with his friend last week.

### No Verb Change

Sometimes, we don’t change the present tense into the past if the information is still true or a general fact.

**Direct**

Nick is still a great player.

**Reported**

Jill said (that) Nick is still a great player.

### Modals

Modal verbs like "could, might, would, should, ought to, had better" usually do not change in reported speech.

**Direct**

Nick should play basketball.

**Reported**

Jill said (that) Nick should play basketball.

### Direct Questions

When we tell the question to someone else, it isn’t a question any more so we need to change the grammar to a normal positive sentence. Remove the question words “do” and “does” and change the verb to the simple past.

**Direct**

Where do you live?

**Reported**

She asked me where I lived.

### Direct Questions with “be”

We change the position of the subject and verb and put the verb in the past tense.

**Direct**

What is the gym?

**Reported**

Nick asked Jill where the gym was.

**Direct**

What are you doing?

**Reported**

Jill asked Nick what he was doing.

### Yes/No Questions

There are no question words so just use “if” and change the verb.

**Direct**

Do you like basketball?

**Reported**

Jill asked Nick if he liked basketball.

**Direct**

Have you ever been to a basketball game?

**Reported**

Nick asked Jill if she had ever been to a basketball game.

### Polite Request

Use “ask + to + infinitive.”

**Direct**

Would you please go to the basketball game with me?

**Reported**

Nick asked Jill to go to the basketball game.

**Direct**

Would you mind driving me to the game?

**Reported**

Jill asked Nick to drive her to the game.

**Direct**

Please don’t be late!

**Reported**

Nick asked Jill not to be late.

**Direct Speech**

Could you stay after the game, please?

**Reported Speech**

Nick asked Jill to stay after the game.

### Giving an Order

Instead of using the word “ask,” use “tell + to + infinitive.”

**Direct**

Hurry up, Jill!

**Reported**

Nick told Jill to hurry up.

**Direct**

Don’t hurt yourself!

**Reported**

Nick told Jill not to hurt himself.

### Other Reporting Verbs

When using reported speech, most people learn to use “say” and “tell.” However, there are a number of other reporting verbs which can more accurately describe what someone has said. Here are a few:

- added
- announced
- communicated
- declared
- disclosed
- expressed
- guessed
- lectured
- yelled

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Final Written Quiz: Reported Speech

Directions: Complete the sentences below the pictures using reported speech.

Example: Emily asked her brother if she could borrow a dollar.

1. Then, she said ____________

2. Paul asked himself ____________

3. Tom said ____________

4. Pam added ____________

5. Max said ____________

6. The orangutang said ____________

7. Lucy said ____________

8. Cindy told her brother ____________

9. Alice told her boyfriend ____________

10. Jerry said ____________

Answers:

1. Then, she said (that) she would pay him back the next day.
2. Paul asked himself what the difference between “partly cloudy” and “partly sunny” meant.
3. Tom said (that) he hadn’t seen Julie lately.
4. Pam added (that) neither had she or Pam added (that) she hadn’t either.
5. Max said (that) it started when he began smoking.
6. The orangutang said (that) I/we had to help them if we’re gonna survive.
7. Lucy said (that) she had been talking to me/us.
8. Cindy told her brother (that) don’t worry because she was here for him.
9. Alice told her boyfriend (that) she had been thinking about him.
10. Jerry said (that) we may/might be a little late for dinner.

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