REPORTED SPEECH

1 Tense changes in reported speech

When we report what someone else said, we are usually reporting at a later time so we change the tenses used by the original speaker:

present simple	→ **past simple**
'I'm (I am) about 100 kilometres from Australia.'	→ *He said (that) he **was** about 100 kilometres from Australia.*
present continuous	→ **past continuous**
'The sun's (is) shining.'	→ *He said (that) the sun **was** shining.*
past simple	→ **past perfect**
*'There **was** a terrible storm.'*	→ *He said (that) there'd (had) **been** a terrible storm.*
present perfect	→ **past perfect**
*'I **haven't (have not)** seen another boat.'*	→ *He said (that) he **hadn't (had not)** seen another boat.*
past perfect	→ **past perfect**
*'I **hadn't (had not) expected** the storm.'*	→ *He said (that) he **hadn't (had not) expected** the storm.*
am going to	→ **was going to**
'I'm (I am) going to win.'	→ *He said (that) he **was going to** win.*
will	→ **would**
'I'll (I will) spend two hours in a bath.'	→ *He said (that) he'd (he **would**) **spend** two hours in a bath.*
can	→ **could**
*'I **can** see sharks and dolphins.'*	→ *He said (that) he **could** see sharks and dolphins.*
may	→ **might**
*'I **may** win.'*	→ *He said (that) he **might** win.*
might	→ **might**
*'I **might** win.'*	→ *He said (that) he **might** win.*
must	→ **had to**
*'I **must** get my hair cut.'*	→ *He said (that) he **had to** get his hair cut.*

⚠ These verbs do not change when they are reported at a later time:
could, would, should, might, ought to and *used to*, and verbs in the past perfect.

When we report *must*, we can use either *must* or *had to* in the reported speech but *had to* is more common:
Kate: *'I **must** buy some fruit.'*
→ *Kate said she **must** / **had to** buy some fruit.*

⚠ We use *must*, not *had to*, when we report:
◆ a negative:
Paul: *'You **mustn't** tell Sally our secret.'*
→ *Paul said we **mustn't** tell Sally our secret.*
◆ or a deduction:
Sarah: *'Jim **must** be tired after the flight.'*
→ *Sarah said Jim **must** be tired after the flight.*

2 Reporting in the same tense

If the reporting verb (e.g. *says*) is in the present tense, we use the same tenses as the original speaker:
Amy: *'I've **missed** the bus so I'll **be** a bit late.'*
→ *Amy says she's **missed** the bus so she'll **be** a bit late.*

If the reporting verb (e.g. *said*) is in the past, we sometimes use the same tenses as the original speaker if the situation is still true:
Robert: *'I **have** three sisters.*
→ *Robert said he **has** three sisters.* or *Robert said he **had** three sisters.*

Carlo: *'I'm **getting** married in June.'*
If we report what Carlo said before June we can say:
*Carlo said he **is getting** married in June.* or *Carlo said he **was getting** married in June.*

3 Verbs used for reporting

We often use *say* to report what somebody said:
*He **said** (that) he was going to win.*

If there is an object (a noun or a pronoun), *say* must be followed by *to*:
*He **said to me** (that) he was going to win.* (**not** *He said me* ...)

When we use *tell* to report what someone said, it is always followed by an object without *to*:
*He **told them** (that) he was going to win.* (**not** *He told to them* ... , *He told that* ...)

We often use other reporting verbs instead of *say* and *tell*.
Some are nearly always followed by *that* and usually have no object:
*He **answered** that ..., He **replied** that ...*

Some behave like *tell*:
*He **reminded me** (that) ..., He **persuaded me** (that) ..., He **informed me** (that) ...*

Some are nearly always followed by *that* and sometimes have an object:
*He **agreed** (with me) that ..., He **explained** (to me) that ..., He **mentioned** (to me) that ...*

(See Advanced Points Paper II.)

4 Reporting offers, advice and promises

After some reporting verbs the *to* infinitive is usually used:
'I'll be a good leader.' → *He **promised to be** a good leader.*
'You should vote for me.' → *He **advised us to vote** for him.*
'We could help you.' → *They **offered to help** me.*

The infinitive is sometimes used after *tell* and *ask* (➤ see Unit 17):
'Be careful.' → *I **told him to be** careful.*
'Please don't smoke.' → *I **asked her not to smoke**.*

5 Reporting questions

Questions are reported using the word order of a statement rather than a question.

Questions with question words (*who, what*, etc) keep these words when they are reported:
'How do you feel?'
→ ~~Rachel asked James how he felt.~~ (**not** *Rachel asked James how did he feel.*)

'What's the weather like?' → *Rachel **asked** James what the weather **was** like.*
(**not** ~~Rachel asked James what was the weather like.~~)

Yes/no questions are reported with *if* or *whether*:
'Can you hear me?'
→ *Rachel **asked** James **if** / **whether** he **could** hear her.*

'Is the weather good?'
→ *Rachel **wanted to know if** / **whether** the weather **was** good.*

⚠ We use the same structure when we ask politely for information:
*Can you tell me what time the next train **leaves**?*
*I'd like to know **if** there's a flight to Australia next Thursday.*

6 References to time, place etc.

Unless we are speaking on the same day, we have to change references to time when we report what someone said:

yesterday	→ *the day before*
today	→ *that day*
tomorrow	→ *the next /following day*
next week	→ *the following week*
now	→ *then*

Other changes include:

here	→ *there*
this	→ *that*

*'I saw him **here yesterday**.'*
→ *She explained that she had seen him **there the day before**.*