



# UNIT 13. REPORTED SPEECH

## REVIEW OF BASIC ASPECTS OF REPORTED SPEECH

- 1) Tense of the reporting verb and time expression changes
- 2) *Say* and *tell*
- 3) How to report modal verbs
  - 3.1. Will/shall
  - 3.2. Could do/could have done
  - 3.3. May do/might do; may have done/might have done
  - 3.4. Should do/ought to do; should have done
  - 3.5. Must do/have to do; must have done

Sections 1 and 2 of this document have been adapted from:

-Murphy, R. (2004). *English Grammar in Use with Answers. A Self-study Reference and Practice Book for Intermediate Students of English.* (3rd revised edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [henceforth referred to as *EGU*]

-Vince, M. (2009). *First Certificate Language Practice: English Grammar and Vocabulary. With Key* (4th ed.). Oxford: MacMillan [henceforth referred to as *FCLP*]

See also Unit 13.2 in Capel, A. & Sharp, W. (2008). *Objective. First Certificate. Self-study Student's Book. With CD-ROM.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 86-87, 203 for reporting verbs and reported questions. Do not forget "tell/ask somebody to do something" (*EGU* Unit 48, section D)



## 1) TENSE OF THE REPORTING VERB AND TIME EXPRESSION CHANGES

- 1.a.) Tenses are moved into the past after a past tense reporting verb:
  - *“I’m leaving”.* Jane said she was leaving.
  
- 1.b.) Sometimes the reporting verb does not come in the past:
  - 1.b.1.) Present tense reports
    - Brenda says she’s arriving at about 6:00.*
  
  - 1.b.2.) Past tense reports
    - If the reported words are “always true”, there is no change.
      - Harry told me that he still likes you.*
    - If a message is being repeated immediately, there is no change.
      - Mary said she’s too busy to come.*



**1.c) The past simple can usually stay the same in reported speech, or you can change it into the past perfect:**

**DIRECT:** *Tom said: "I woke up feeling ill, so I didn't go to work".*

**REPORTED:** *Tom said (that) he woke up feeling ill, so he didn't go to work.*

**REPORTED:** *Tom said (that) he had woken up feeling ill, so he hadn't gone to work.*



## 1.d) Certain time expressions often change:

**DIRECT**



**REPORTED**

**Today**

**that day**

**Tomorrow**

**the next day**

**Next (week)**

**the following (week);**

**the (week) after**

**Last (week)**

**the (week) before**

**This**

**that**

**Here**

**there**



## 2) SAY AND TELL

- ***We say something and we tell somebody.***
- ***Also, we tell somebody that... and we say to somebody / we say that...***
  - ***I said I could meet you this evening, but I'm really busy.***
  - ***I told you I could meet you this evening, but I'm really busy.***
  - ***I said to him that I'd meet him this evening.***



## 3) HOW TO REPORT MODAL VERBS

### 3.1) WILL / SHALL

What's the function of these modals in the following sentences?

*I **will** be there. (Future time; maybe used as a promise)*

*I **shall** be there. (Future time; formal speech/writing; emphasizing a promise or a fact)*

***Shall** I help? (Offer)*

○ How would you transform the sentences above into indirect speech statements?

*She said/told me that she **would** be there.*

*She said/told me that she **would** be there.*

*She asked if she **should** help.*



## 3.2) COULD DO / COULD HAVE DONE

What's the function of these modal verbs in the following sentences?

A) *I'm so hungry. I **could** eat a horse. (Present possibility – not real in this case)*

B) *I was so hungry. I **could have eaten** a horse. (Past possibility –not real in this case)*

How would you turn sentences A) and B) into reported speech if uttered some time after they were said?

A) *He said (that) he was so hungry that he **could have eaten** a horse.*

B) *He said (that) he was so hungry that he **could have eaten** a horse.*



## 3.3) MAY DO / MIGHT DO; MAY HAVE DONE / MIGHT HAVE DONE

What's the function of these modals in the following sentences?:

- *It **may/might** be Samantha. (Possibility about a present/future event).*
- *I **can't** find my handbag anywhere. I **may/might** have left it in the shop. (Possibility about a past action).*

How would you turn the sentences above into reported speech statements if uttered some time after the original ones were said?:

- *She said that it **may/might** have been Samantha.*
- *She said that she **couldn't** find her handbag anywhere and that she **may/might** have left it in the shop.*





## 3.4) SHOULD DO / OUGHT TO DO; SHOULD HAVE DONE

What's the function of these modal verbs in the following sentences?

- I think you **should** see a doctor. (Advice, recommendation)*
- You **ought not to** continue. (Advice, polite instruction)*
- You **should have posted** the letter yesterday. (Obligation regarding a past event; maybe a criticism)*
- You **shouldn't have told** me the answer. (Negative obligation regarding a past event; maybe a criticism)*

How would you turn the sentences above into reported speech statements?

- He told me that I **should** see a doctor.*
- He told me that I **ought not to** continue.*
- He told me that I **should have posted** the letter **yesterday/the day before**. (Depending on the time period of the reported speech sentence).*
- He told me that I **shouldn't have told** him the answer.*



## 3.5) MUST DO / HAVE TO DO; MUST HAVE DONE

3.5.1) What's the function of these modal verbs in the following sentences?

*We **must go home.** (Personal obligation)*

*We **have to take the exam again.** (External obligation)*

How would you turn the sentences above into reported speech statements?

*We **had to go home.***

*We **had to take the exam again.***

3.5.2.) What's the function of the modal verb in the second sentence below?

*I can't find my bag anywhere. I **must have left it in the shop.** (Certainty about a past action)*

How would you turn the sentence above into a reported speech statement?

*I can't find my bag anywhere. I **must have left it in the shop.***