

Miscellaneous Topics

Direct and indirect speech

Suppose **Kareena Kapoor** (or **Shah Rukh Khan**, depending on your preference) were to propose to you! You want to report this to a friend. How do you do it? You can report what she said in her own words:

Kareena said, "I love you now."

But you can also report the same by saying:

Kareena said she loved me then.

Here you are reporting what Kareena said in your own words.



What you have done is that you have changed **I** to **she**, **you** to **me**, **love** to **loved** (changing **present** tense to **past**) and the adverb **now** to **then**.

When we report what others have said in their own words, we report it in **Direct Speech**, and when we report what others have said in our own words, we report it in **Indirect (or Reported) Speech**. Generally when we report to a third person, we use the indirect speech.

Now, in the first sentence discussed, you may have noticed that the tense of the reporting verb changes.

If, the tense of the reporting verb is in the past tense, then the tense of the reported speech takes any of the four forms of the past tense. However, if the tense of the reporting verb is in the present tense, or in the future tenses, the tense of the reported speech does not change.

For example, you want to report the sentence:

1. She says, "I love dogs."

You report it as:

2. She says (that) she **loves** dogs.

You do **not** say:

3. She said that she **loved** dogs.

What Kareena said

You had an interesting conversation with Kareena. Let us see how you report all she said to your friend.

What Kareena said	What you report
<p>I'm not well.</p> 	<p>She said she was not well.</p> <p><i>In this case we may or may not use "that". So, it could be: "She said that she was not well." Further, we see that generally the present form of direct speech changes to the past form in indirect speech. So, the main verb "am" changes to "was". In this case, simple present changes to simple past. Similarly, "is" changes to "was", "do/does" changes to "did", "will" changes to "would", "are" changes to "were", "have/has" changes to "had", and "can" changes to "could". The main verb is "was" in this case.</i></p>
<p>However, I'm happy to be here today.</p>	<p>But she said that she was happy to be there that day.</p> <p><i>We should not report "She said that but she was happy to be there that day." Here, we do not put "but" after "she said". Rather we put it in the beginning. Same with words like "however, instead, moreover, further, etc." -- words that impart direction to a sentence. Similarly, "here" becomes "there", "ago" becomes "before", "thus" becomes "so", "today" becomes "that day", "yesterday" becomes "the day before" and "last night" becomes "the night before".</i></p>
<p>I am living in Mumbai now.</p>	<p>She said that she was living in Mumbai then.</p> <p><i>Here, present continuous changes to past continuous. We see that the adverb "now" changes to "then".</i></p>
<p>I have finished shooting for my new movie.</p>	<p>She said that she had finished shooting for her new movie.</p> <p><i>Here, again, there is a change to the corresponding past form; the present perfect changes to past perfect.</i></p>
<p>It will be released next month.</p>	<p>She said that it would be released the coming month.</p> <p><i>Here, we see that the future tense "will" changes to "would". Similarly, "shall" changes to "should". "Next month" changes to "coming month".</i></p>
<p>Akshay and Twinkle got married last month.</p>	<p>She said (that) Akshay and Twinkle (had) got married the month before.</p> <p><i>When the sentence being reported is in the simple past form, the reported speech may take the past perfect form. The sentence is also correct without "had". Here, we do not add "that" after "said" as "that" is compulsory after "told her" and so cannot be repeated.</i></p>
<p>Aishwarya and Salman were probably seeing each other.</p>	<p>She said that Aishwarya and Salman had been seeing each other.</p> <p><i>When the sentence being reported is in the past continuous form, the reported speech may take the past perfect continuous form.</i></p>
<p>I met Shah Rukh yesterday.</p>	<p>She said that she had met Shah Rukh the day before.</p> <p><i>Here, "I met" becomes the past perfect "she had met" and "yesterday" is referred to as "the day before".</i></p>

What Kareena said	What you report
Do you have any news of Aamir?	<p>She asked me if I had any news of Aamir.</p> <p><i>While reporting questions, we do not use the reporting verb "say" or "tell". It is changed to "ask" or "inquire". A common confusion is when to use "ask" and when "inquire". We use "inquire" when it is a question that asks for some information. But in this case, it is a simple question, which can be answered by a simple yes or no without giving any information.</i></p>
<p>Wow! What a gorgeous dress you are wearing!</p> 	<p>She exclaimed admiringly that I was wearing a gorgeous dress.</p> <p><i>Similarly, in reporting sentences with exclamations, we use "exclaimed" as the reporting verb with the relevant adverb as "admiringly" in this case. If the sentence had been, "Hi! Great to see you", it would be reported as "She exclaimed with delight that it was great to see me."</i></p>
Where did you get it?	<p>She inquired where I had got it.</p> <p><i>Thus, we see that the reporting verb changes according to the nature of the reported speech. If the sentence is: He told his wife, "Don't do that", it will be reported as "He forbade his wife from doing that."</i></p>
A big fan of mine says I look good only in minis.	<p>She informed that a fan of hers says she looks good only in minis.</p> <p><i>We see that here we retain the present form of the verb "says" and do not use "said". Similarly, we can retain the present form of the verb "looks", as what is being reported is still true. We can also say: "She informed that a fan of hers says, she looked good only in minis." But we must always use the past when there is a change between what was said and now. Suppose the fan had said that she looked best in minis two years back, we should have used the past form to report it, as the situation did not hold anymore.</i></p>
Can you please get a nice one for me?	<p>She asked if I would get her a nice mini.</p> <p><i>Here, "you" becomes the first person "I" and the request "could" becomes the possibility "would".</i></p>

Said or told?

A common confusion that we often have is when to use "said" and when to use "told".

Whenever we use "told", it must be something like, she "told" me that, he "told" her that etc., That is, when you use "told", it must mention "whom" (that is who was told).

In the case of "said", it is not necessary to mention "whom". So, we can say, "she told me that..." or "she said that..."

Active and passive voice



Suppose you want to tell a friend:

Shahid Kapoor loves you.

In this sentence, the emphasis is on Shahid. He is the hero of the sentence, the subject of the sentence. The subject here does something.

When the subject of the sentence is presented as doing something, it is said to be in the active voice.

The verb **loves** is said to be in the active voice. It is so called because the subject does something, it is active.

But if you want to put the emphasis on your friend, the object of the love in the earlier sentence, you would rephrase the same sentence as:

You are loved by Shahid Kapoor.

Here, something is done to **you**. The verb **loved** is said to be in the passive voice. It is said to be passive because it does not do anything.

The passive voice is not favoured in usage nowadays. Hence, if you use the word processor to type anything in the passive form, it will immediately draw attention to the fact that you have used the passive voice, and suggest a change to active voice.

However, there are certain cases when the passive voice is to be preferred. When the subject is not specified or vague, it is better to use the passive voice.

For example:

1. **Are the utensils cleaned everyday?** (Not Does somebody clean the utensils? — as who does the cleaning is not important.)
2. **All the utensils were stolen.** (Not somebody stole all the utensils as we do not know who did the stealing.)
3. **How is wooing learnt?** (Not how do people learn to woo?)
4. **All the trains were cancelled because of fog.** (Not they cancelled all the trains because of fog.)
5. **The freshers' party has been postponed.** (Not they have postponed the freshers' party.)

Only transitive can be passive

It must be borne in mind that **only a transitive verb can be made passive.** An intransitive verb like "**sing**" **cannot be made passive.** For example, **I sing** cannot be made passive. It can be made passive only when the intransitive verb sing takes a cognate object after it. For example: **He sings Indipop.**

This can be made passive as: **Indipop is sung by him.**

Some verbs have two objects. For example: **I gave the book to Rohini.**

Object 1 is direct and object 2 is indirect. Such sentences can have two passive forms:

1. **The book was given to Rohini by me.**
2. **Rohini was given the book by me.**