We can report people’s speech in two main ways. We can, for example, give the exact words spoken by them. This kind of structure is called ‘direct speech’.

- She said, ‘What do you want?’
- Suman asked, ‘Where are you going?’

We can also make the speaker’s words part of our own sentence, using conjunctions and changing pronouns and other words where necessary. This kind of reporting is called ‘indirect speech’ or ‘reported speech’.

- She asked what I wanted.
- Suman asked me where I was going.

Note that we cannot normally mix these two structures.

**Basic rules for indirect speech**

When words and thoughts are reported, there is usually a change of tenses, pronouns and other words. These changes are mostly natural and logical.

**Change of pronouns**

A change of speaker may mean a change of pronoun. Study the following example.

She said, ‘Where are you going?’ (Direct speech)

She asked me where I was going. (Indirect speech)

You may have noticed that the pronoun you in the direct speech changed to I in the indirect speech. There are no exact rules regarding the change of pronouns. It all depends upon the context.

**Change of ‘here and now’ words**

A change of place and time may mean changing words like here, this, now, today etc. For example, here may become there in indirect speech; this may become that; now may become then.

- He said, ‘I got my report yesterday.’ (Direct speech)
- He said that he got his report the previous day. (Indirect speech)

**Change of tenses**

A change of time may mean a change of tense. So after past reporting verbs, the verbs of the
Basic rules of reported speech

original speech are usually made more past.

**Simple present tense** in the direct speech will become **simple past tense** in the indirect speech.

Present continuous tense will become past continuous tense.

Present perfect tense will become past perfect tense.

Simple past tense will become past perfect tense

Past continuous tense will become past perfect continuous tense.