Indirect Speech

The reporting verb in indirect speech is usually the simple past:

Bob: I play tennis every day. (He said this a month ago.)

[The subject and the time changes in the report clause.]

Bob said (that) he played tennis every day.

[Exceptions]

1. An immediate report
   Bob said he wants to see you today.
   (This report is made just 30 minutes after the speech was made.)

2. A general truth or something that is still true
   The teacher said that oxygen is heavier than hydrogen.
   Linda said she is a doctor. (She’s still a doctor.)

When the reporting verb is in the present tense:

Diana: I want to be a millionaire.

Diana always says (that) she wants to be a millionaire.
Diana has said (that) she wants to be a millionaire.

Indirect Instructions

The teacher (asked the students): Sit down!

The teacher asked the students to sit down.
The teacher told the students to sit down.
The teacher commanded / ordered the students to sit down.

The teacher (told the students): Don’t hand in your assignments late.

The teacher asked the students not to hand in their assignments late.
The teacher told the students not to hand in their assignments late.
The teacher commanded / ordered the students not to hand in their assignments late.
Indirect Speech: Tense and Adverb Changes

John: I’m very busy today.

John said (that) *he was* very busy *that day*.

John: I finished my assignment yesterday.

John said (that) *he had finished his* assignment *the day before*.

John: I’ll finish my assignment tomorrow.

John said (that) *he would finish his* assignment *the next day*.

Do NOT change the following verb forms when you change direct speech to indirect speech:

- **Should, could, might, and ought to**
  Ryan said he should do his homework.

- **Past Perfect**
  Tim said, “I had done it before he came” --> Tim said he had done it before before he had come.

- **Unreal conditionals**
  Bill said if he were you, he wouldn’t do such a thing.

- **Past Modals**
  Laura told me I should have gone to the party.

Common Adverb Changes

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<tr>
<th>Indirect Speech</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>today</td>
<td>that day</td>
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<td>tomorrow</td>
<td>the next day</td>
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<td>yesterday</td>
<td>(the following day, a day later)</td>
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<td>next week</td>
<td>the day before</td>
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<td>last week</td>
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