

Reported speech – Bite sized grammar

When: We use reported speech to describe what somebody has said.

Business English context: We use reported speech to talk about what was said in a discussion or phone call. It is also used in writing minutes for a business meeting.

What: You need to make a number of changes when turning direct speech into reported speech. You often need to change the pronoun ('I' to 'she', for example) and the tense. A **'good rule of thumb'** is to go one tense back into the past.

Tense changes:

- 'Will' becomes 'would'.
- 'Must' becomes 'had to'.
- 'Can' becomes 'could'.
- The present simple becomes the past simple.
- The present continuous becomes the past continuous.
- The past simple and present perfect become the past perfect.
- The past continuous becomes the past perfect continuous.
- Remember if you are reporting a question that starts with a verb use 'if'.

Examples:

1) *'Have you finished those reports?'*

RS: He asked if you had finished those reports.

2) *'Machine 21 is having a lot of problems today.'*

RS: She said that machine 21 was having lots of problems today.

3) *'You must wear protective goggles!'*

RS: He said that we had to wear protective goggles.