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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The Grammar Gameshow

### Reported speech

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**Will**

Hello, and welcome to today's Grammar Gameshow! I'm your host, Will! And If it ain't broke, don't fix it! You know, I can't stand bad grammar. And of course, let's not forget Leslie, our all-knowing voice in the sky.

**Leslie**

Hello, everyone!

**Will**

Tonight, we're going to ask you three questions about...

**Leslie**

Reported speech! That he-said, she-said grammar that's useful for gossip, rumour, hearsay and conjecture!

**Will**

OK! Now, let's meet our contestants!

**Bill**

Hello, all. My name is Bill!

**Will**

And contestant number two?

**Nana Will**

Hello, schnookums! I'm Nana Will!

**Will**

Nana Will! What are you doing here? I haven't seen you since... but that was such a long t...

**Nana Will**

I came to see how you're getting on, poppet. Your mum tells me you're doing so well. Are you wearing clean underwear?

**Will**

Nana! Not cool!

**Nana Will**

Willikins! Answer your nana right now!

**Will**

Yes, Nana! Clean-ish underwear, Nana.

**Nana Will**

Very good. Aren't you going to introduce me to your little friend?

**Will**

Nana Will this is Bill. Bill this is Nana Will. Leslie, Nana Will. Nana Will, Leslie.

**Bill**

Hello, Nana Will.

**Leslie**

Hello, Nana Will.

**Will**

Can I get on now?

**Nana Will**

Yes, of course dear. Who's stopping you?

**Will**

OK. Let's get going and don't forget you can play along at home too. Our first round is a straight-up questions round. What are the three most commonly used verbs in reported speech grammar?

**Bill**

Say, tell and ask.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

Tell me one verb pattern for say, tell and ask.

**Bill**

Say something to someone. Tell someone something. Ask someone if or whether or question word.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

Final question in this round. Give me an example of say and tell.

**Nana Will**

No. I'll take this one, if you don't mind, dearie. I remember when you were just a little sprite, and we went to the zoo, and we saw an ostrich for the first time. And do you know what he said? He said it was a big chicken! He told me it was a big chicken!

**Will**

Nana! Really?

**Nana Will**

Just answering the question, pumpkin.

**Will**

Leslie?

**Leslie**

Well done! Reported speech is used to inform the listener what was said by someone on a different occasion. The three most common reported speech verbs are say, tell and ask. Say is commonly used without a personal pronoun - Will said it was a big chicken - while tell must be followed by one. Will told Nana Will it was a big chicken. Finally, ask is used in reported questions. Ask can be followed by a pronoun and then if or whether for a yes/no question, or a question word for a question word question.

**Will**

Good work, Bill. Have Fifteen points for you. And, er, twenty points for Nana Will. On to round two. Answer this. What usually happens when to the tense of a sentence when it changes from direct speech to reported speech?

**Bill**

It usually gets rolled back one tense!

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

Well done. Let's have a practice, shall we? I'll tell you the sentence, and you give me the reported speech version. Ready? I love my Nana.

**Nana Will**

He said he loved his Nana.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

Who's been playing with my question cards?

**Nana Will**

It's a mystery dear. Keep reading.

**Will**

I wanted to be an elephant when I was a child.

**Nana Will**

He told me he had wanted to be an elephant when he was a child.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

I will always listen to Nana Will.

**Nana Will**

He said he would always listen to Nana Will.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

Well, answer this one then! One of those sentences does not need to have its tense changed in reported speech. Which one is it, and why?

**Nana Will**

It's the first one. He said he loves his Nana. This is because the situation hasn't changed from when it was said. It is still true.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Nana Will**

Now, don't test me young man, or I'll give you a smack on the botty bot-bot.

**Will**

Leslie!

**Leslie**

That's absolutely right. When changing speech from direct to reported, remember that the tense of the direct speech should be rolled back one step towards the past. For example, present becomes past, and past becomes past perfect. However, there are one or two exceptions. Firstly, some tenses and verb types don't change, such as the past perfect, and verbs like would and could. Secondly, if something which was said is still true at the time of reporting, no tense change is necessary. This is also true if the reporting verb say or tell is in the present tense.

**Will**

Well done, you get 11.2 poi...

**Nana Will**

Oh, Will! Before I forget, I brought you some milk.

**Will**

Nana Will! You're not supposed to come ou...

**Nana Will**

Drink up, dear! Nana knows best! Well done!

**Will**

Let's move on to our final round. Along with these tense changes... Oh, she's gone to sleep! OK, everyone let's...right. Along with these tense changes, certain subjective words must also change when converted to reported speech. Have a look at these sentences, and tell me which words need to change. He said "I'm here now." Yes, Bill?

**Bill**

He said he was there then.

**Leslie**

Cor... Correct!

**Will**

I said "I got this last Tuesday." Yes, Bill?

**Bill**

You said you had got that the Tuesday before.

**Leslie**

Cor... Correct!

**Will**

They said "We'll be there next year." Yes, Bill?

**Bill**

They said they would be there the year after.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

Leslie?

**Leslie**

Great stuff! In speech, certain words such as pronouns, place and time words will be relative to that context. Later, when these are transferred into reported speech, they may need to change, so be careful!

**Will**

And that brings us to the end of today's Grammar Gameshow. Let's count out the points... And the winner is... Bill! Yay! Woo! Well done! Here's what you won!

**Nana Will**

Young man. Blood is thicker than water. I've combed your hair. I've taken you to school. I've even changed your nappy. So, don't tell me I lost.

**Will**

Nana! You're awake. How wonderful. And the winner is Nana! Well done! Here's what she's won!

**Leslie**

It's a nice cup of tea!

**Will**

We'll see you again next week, where you can play for another prize. And Bill... sorry old pal. I can't play anymore. Nana's orders. Whoops! I must have pushed the wrong button! Unleash the ravages of time.

**Bill**

Will! Did you just... to your Nana!

**Will**

Oh, don't worry. She's tough as old boots, that one. She'll be fine. It's the animals that I feel sorry for. It looks like we'll need another contestant. Thanks for joining us. Say goodbye, Leslie.

**Leslie**

Nagaatti, Leslie

**Will**

See you next time.