

# Mastering Reported Speech Through Gossip

Date: May 3, 2026    Topic: Gossip Like a Pro In this fun and interactive B1 English lesson, students explor...

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify and apply correct verb tense changes in reported speech contexts.
- Use specific vocabulary related to rumors and social information sharing accurately.
- Convert direct statements into natural-sounding reported sentences during social conversations.

## VOCABULARY

Word	Definition	Example
<b>Rumor</b> (noun)	A story or report of uncertain or doubtful truth.	<i>I heard a rumor that the company is moving to a new office.</i>
<b>Speculate</b> (verb)	To form a theory about a subject without firm evidence.	<i>Journalists began to speculate about the cause of the accident.</i>
<b>Confidential</b> (adjective)	Intended to be kept secret.	<i>All medical records are strictly confidential.</i>
<b>Exaggerate</b> (verb)	To represent something as being better or worse than it really is.	<i>He tends to exaggerate his achievements to impress people.</i>
<b>Source</b> (noun)	A person or thing that provides information.	<i>She refused to name the source of her information.</i>
<b>Idle</b> (adjective)	Lacking a sense of purpose or utility; pointless.	<i>They spent the afternoon in idle conversation about the weather.</i>
<b>Spread</b> (verb)	To reach or cause to reach a wider area or more people.	<i>The news of the wedding spread quickly through the village.</i>
<b>Disclosure</b> (noun)	The action of making new or secret information known.	<i>The disclosure of the secret documents caused a massive scandal.</i>

### The Art of Backshifting

When reporting speech, we move the tense 'back' one step into the past if the reporting verb (said, told) is in the past tense.

- *Present Simple → Past Simple: 'I like it' → He said he liked it.*
- *Present Continuous → Past Continuous: 'I am working' → She said she was working.*
- *Will → Would: 'I will go' → They said they would go.*

## READING PASSAGE

Have you ever wondered why we feel a sudden urge to share a juicy **rumor**? While many people view gossip as a negative habit, psychologists often argue that it serves as a form of social glue. When we **speculate** about the lives of others, we are actually building connections and establishing shared values within our community. However, problems arise when information that was meant to be **confidential** is shared without permission. In a typical office setting, a small piece of news can quickly transform. People often **exaggerate** the facts to make the story more entertaining, leading to a distorted version of the truth. It is always important to consider the **source** of the information before believing everything you hear. Is the person sharing the news reliable, or are they just engaging in **idle** chatter to pass the time? Once a story begins to **spread**, it becomes very difficult to stop. What started as a simple **disclosure** between two friends can end up being the talk of the entire town by the evening. For English learners, reporting these conversations is a fantastic way to practice grammar. When we report what someone said, we usually move the tense back. For example, if Sarah says, 'I am happy,' we report that Sarah said she was happy. This shift in time helps the listener understand that we are talking about a past conversation. Mastering this skill allows you to navigate social situations with more confidence and accuracy, ensuring you can 'gossip' like a pro without losing the original meaning of the message. Furthermore, understanding the nuances of how information moves through a group can improve your professional relationships and social standing. By being mindful of the impact of your words, you can use these social dynamics to foster trust rather than create conflict. Whether you are discussing a new project at work or a friend's upcoming wedding, the way you report information defines your reputation as a communicator.

## PRACTICE EXERCISES

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1. Direct: 'I work in London.' → Reported: He said he \_\_\_ in London.

A) works

B) worked

C) will work

2. Direct: 'I am going out.' → Reported: She said she \_\_\_ going out.

A) is

B) was

C) has been

3. Direct: 'I have lost my keys.' → Reported: He said he \_\_\_ his keys.

A) has lost

B) had lost

C) lost

4. Direct: 'I will help you.' → Reported: She said she \_\_\_ help me.

A) will

B) would

C) can

5. Direct: 'I can swim.' → Reported: He said he \_\_\_ swim.

A) could

B) can

C) would

6. Direct: 'I don't like coffee.' → Reported: She said she \_\_\_ like coffee.

7. Direct: 'We are late.' → Reported: They said they \_\_\_ late.

8. Direct: 'I saw a movie.' → Reported: He said he \_\_\_ seen a movie.

9. Direct: 'I will call you.' → Reported: She said she \_\_\_ call me.

10. Direct: 'I have a car.' → Reported: He said he \_\_\_ a car.