

Reported speech

Spanish · British English › Spanish

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Reported Speech: Tense Shifts when Reporting Past Actions

Hello! Today, we're diving into the world of **reported speech** (mowa zależna) in Spanish. It's a super useful skill that lets you tell others what someone said, thought, or asked, but after the fact. Imagine you're a journalist reporting on an event – you need to convey what was said, but in your own words!

The key rule we need to master is **tense shifting**, also known as 'backshifting'. When the introductory verb (like *dijo*, *preguntó*) is in a past tense, the verb in the reported speech must also be adjusted accordingly. This ensures the tenses remain consistent. Sound complicated? Don't worry, it's quite logical once you get the hang of it!

Subject + introductory verb in the past + **que** + reported verb (shifted)

- The **Presente** (present tense) shifts to the **Imperfecto** (imperfect past).
- The past tenses, **Pretérito Perfecto** and **Pretérito Indefinido** (perfect and simple past), shift to the **Pluscuamperfecto** (pluperfect).
- The **Futuro Simple** (simple future) shifts to the **Condicional Simple** (simple conditional).
- The structure **ir a + infinitivo** (near future) shifts to **ir (in the Imperfecto) a + infinitivo**.

Direct Speech	Reported (Indirect) Speech
Presente	Imperfecto
Pretérito Indefinido / Perfecto	Pluscuamperfecto
Futuro Simple	Condicional Simple
Ir a + Infinitivo (Presente)	Ir a + Infinitivo (Imperfecto)

Ella dijo que no tenía tiempo para ir al cine.
She said she didn't have time to go to the cinema.

Nos dijo que vendría a la fiesta al día siguiente.
He told us he would come to the party the next day.

Nos dijo que había llegado tarde a la reunión.
He told us he had arrived late for the meeting.

Nos dijo que iba a visitar a sus abuelos ese fin de semana.
He told us he was going to visit his grandparents that weekend.

Remember: **Presente** -> **Imperfecto**. Think of it like a **time warp**! If you're reporting something that was already said, you naturally **step back one tense in time**.

Watch out for common pitfalls! Remember, besides changing the verbs, you also need to adjust **time and place expressions** in reported speech. For instance:

Today (*hoy*) -> That day (*ese día*)

Tomorrow (*mañana*) -> The next day (*al día siguiente*)

Here (*aquí*) -> There (*allí*)

It's worth noting that reported speech is a broad topic, and in more complex sentences, especially those expressing emotions, wishes, or doubts, you might also encounter the **Subjuntivo**. However, in these exercises, we're focusing on the basic tense shifts within the **Indicativo** mood. Great job!

Practise these rules, and you'll quickly find yourself confidently reporting what others have said! Good luck!

Part 1 – Choose the correct word

Circle the option that correctly fills each gap.

1. Ella pensó que _____ tarde si no salía ahora.
She thought she would be late if she didn't leave now.
A) llegara B) llega C) llegaría D) llegará
2. Me preguntó si _____ un café o un té.
He asked me if I wanted coffee or tea.
A) yo quería B) ella quería C) tú querías D) él quería
3. Me preguntó si _____ la respuesta al día siguiente.
He asked me if I would know the answer the next day.
A) sabe B) supiera C) sabría D) sabrá
4. El estudiante dijo que _____ más para el examen.
The student said that he was going to study more for the exam.
A) irá a estudiar B) iba a estudiar C) fue a estudiar D) estudiara
5. El niño se quejó de que aquel día no _____ bien la pizarra.
The boy complained that he couldn't see the board well that day.
A) viera B) ve C) veía D) verá
6. Anoche me _____ tan pronto de la fiesta.
Last night he begged me not to leave the party so early.
Gap 1: A) suplica B) suplicará C) suplicó D) suplique
Gap 2: A) que no me iré B) que no me voy C) que no me fuera D) que no me vaya
7. Ella nos dijo que _____ con sus amigos ese día.
She told us that she was going to go out with her friends that day.
A) saliera B) irá a salir C) iba a salir D) fue a salir
8. Pensó que _____ había sido muy estresante.
He thought that the previous month had been very stressful.
A) el mes anterior B) este mes C) el mes pasado D) el mes que viene

Part 2 – Fill in the gap

Write the missing word or phrase on the line.

1. Afirmó que en aquel momento no _____ resolver el problema solo.
He said that at that moment he couldn't solve the problem on his own.
2. Mencionó que _____ tendríamos una reunión.

He mentioned that we would have a meeting the next day.

3. Creyó que _____ a visitarnos al día siguiente.

He believed that he would come to visit us the next day.

4. Anunciaron que el concierto _____ en breve.

They announced that the concert was going to start soon.

5. La madre _____ que _____ la cena con antelación.

The mother advised them to prepare dinner in advance.

6. Me aseguró que _____ una solución para el problema.

He assured me that he would find a solution to the problem.

Part 3 — Put the verbs in the right form

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets on each line.

1. La reunión ya _____ (empezar) cuando _____ (llegar) nosotros.

The meeting had already started when we arrived.

Part 4 — Translate

Write each word in Spanish on the line.

1. help › _____

2. read › _____

3. to say › _____

4. the previous day › _____

5. my › _____

6. he › _____

Part 5 — Match the pairs

Write the letter of the matching translation next to each term.

Term	Translation
1. ir a aprender	A to be going to learn
2. trabajar	B to be going to visit
3. me	C to work
4. escribir	D to have
5. ir a visitar	E write
6. salir	F to be going to travel
7. ir a viajar	G to go out
8. tener	H me

Answer Key

Part 1 – Choose the correct word

1. C) llegaría
2. A) yo quería
3. C) sabría
4. B) iba a estudiar
5. C) veía
6. Gap 1: C) suplicó; Gap 2: C) que no me fuera
7. C) iba a salir
8. A) el mes anterior

Part 2 – Fill in the gap

1. podía
2. al día siguiente
3. vendría
4. iba a empezar
5. aconsejó; prepararan
6. encontraría

Part 3 – Put the verbs in the right form

1. había empezado; llegamos

Part 4 – Translate

1. ayudar
2. leer
3. decir
4. el día anterior
5. mi
6. él

Part 5 – Match the pairs

1. A (to be going to learn)
2. C (to work)
3. H (me)
4. E (write)
5. B (to be going to visit)
6. G (to go out)
7. F (to be going to travel)
8. D (to have)