Reported Speech (Indirect Speech)

The main points to remember:

Introductory clause in the present tense (e.g.he says):	Introductory clause in the past tense (e.g. he said):
- **No backshift** of tenses	- Backshift of tenses
- Personal pronouns must be changed (I → he/she etc.)	- Personal pronouns must be changed (I → he/she etc.)
- Expressions of time and place **are not changed**	- Expressions of time and place are often changed
Example: *Peter **says,** "I want to talk to Mary tomorrow."* → *Peter **says** that he wants to talk to Mary tomorrow.*	**Example:** *Peter **said,** "I want to talk to Mary tomorrow."* → *Peter **said** that he wanted to talk to Mary the next day.*

1. Backshift

If the introductory clause is in the past tense (e.g. he said), the tenses must be shifted back:

- present tense	→	past tense	Tom said, "I **don't want** to go out." Tom said that he **didn't want** to go out.
- past tense	→	past perfect	Brian said, "I **lost** my watch." Brian said that he **had lost** his watch.
- present perfect	→	past perfect	Angi said, "They **have** just **left**." Angi said that they **had** just **left**.
- past perfect	→	past perfect	He said, "I **hadn't expected** so much." He said that he **hadn't expected** so much.
- will-future	→	conditional	Peter said, "I **will see** you soon." Peter said that he **would see** him soon."

Important:	will → would	But:	would → would
	can → could		could → could
	may → might		might → might
	shall → should		should → should

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The simple present can remain unchanged in reported speech to show that something is
always the case e.g.:

John said, "School with us starts at 8.10."      He told me that school with them
                                                  starts at 8.10.
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2. Personal Pronouns / possessive determiners

I → he / she	She said, "**I** will be back soon." She said to me that **she** would be back soon.
we → they	My friends said, "**We** want to leave at once." My friends said to me that **they** wanted to leave at once.
my → his / her	Peter said, "I don't like **my** new car." Peter said that he didn't like **his** new car.

3. Expressions of time and place

My father said, "I'm sure I saw you **here last week**."	→	My father said that he was sure that he had seen him **there the week before.**

Expressions of time and place are usually changed as follows:				
today	→ **that** day	two days **ago**	→	two days **before**
tonight	→ **that** night	tomorrow	→	**the next** day/ **the following** day
this week	→ **that** week	**next** year	→	**the next** year/ **the following** year
this year	→ **that** year			
yesterday	→ **the** day **before**	**here**	→	**there**
last Friday	→ **the** Friday **before**	in **this** country	→	in **that** country

Expressions like today, this month, next year don't have to be changed, if the report is given before that day, month, year etc. is over.

4.Questions in reported speech

Steve said to me, "**What** do you think about my new girlfriend?"	→	Steve **asked** me **what** I thought about his new girlfriend.
Carol said, "Do you speak English at home?"	→	Carol **asked** me **if/whether** we spoke English at home.

If the question in direct speech is without an interrogative (Fragewort, e.g. what, who etc.), **if** or **whether** is used to introduce the clause in reported speech.

!! Mind the word order:
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 - in direct questions        auxiliary/subject/main verb
                              Can       I       go out?

 - in reported questions       subject/(auxiliary)/main verb
                         ... if I        can     go out
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5. Commands in reported speech

Danny said, "Leave the room immediately!"	→	Danny **told** him **to leave** the room immediately.
Mary said to her sister, "Don't run so fast!"	→	Mary **told** her sister **not to run** so fast.

For commands in reported speech use introductory verbs like 'tell' or 'advise' + infinitive with 'to'.
To express negative commands use 'tell' or 'advise' + not + infinitive with 'to'.