

# Direct speech writing rules in English



In the above picture, Mark is talking to Jane. The words inside the blue box are the exact words that he speaks.

Here is how we express this:

He said, "Let's go to the cinema."

This is direct speech. Direct speech is when we report the exact words that

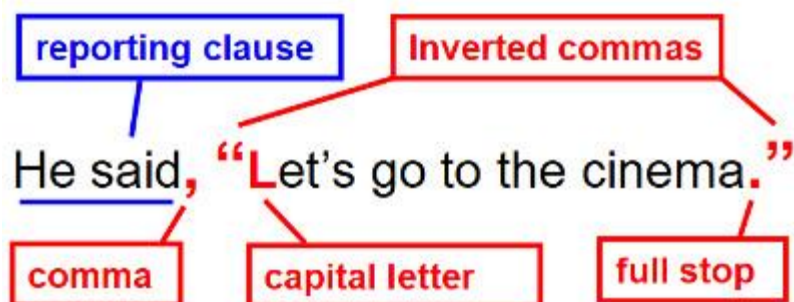
In this English lesson, you will learn:

- The rules for writing direct speech.
- The correct punctuation.
- Vocabulary to report direct speech.

## Reporting clause before the direct speech

The reporting clause of direct speech is the short clause that indicates who is talking. It is the clause that is outside of the inverted commas. It is therefore **not** the words being spoken.

We can write the reporting clause either **before** or **after** the direct speech. If the reporting clause is **before** the direct speech, we write it as follows:



Grammar rules – If the reporting clause is **before** the direct speech:

We write a comma (,) before the direct speech.

We write the exact words inside the inverted commas.

The first letter is a capital letter.

We write a full stop (.) before the closing inverted commas.

## Reporting clause before a question or exclamation

He asked, “Do you want a cake?”

question mark

He shouted, “Hurry up!”

exclamation mark

If the reporting clause is before a question or exclamation:

We write a comma (,) before the direct speech.

We write the exact words inside the inverted commas.

The first letter is a capital letter.

We write a question mark (?) before the closing inverted commas.

or

We write an exclamation mark (!) before the closing inverted commas.

## Reporting clause after the direct speech

“Let’s go to the cinema,” he said.

Diagram labels:  
- Inverted commas (red box) pointing to the opening and closing quotes.  
- reporting clause (blue box) pointing to the text 'he said'.  
- capital letter (red box) pointing to the 'L' in 'Let's'.  
- comma (red box) pointing to the comma after 'cinema'.  
- full stop (red box) pointing to the period at the end of the sentence.

If the reporting clause is after the direct speech:

We write the exact words inside the inverted commas.

The first letter is a capital letter.

We write a comma (,) before the closing inverted commas.

We write a full stop (.) at the end of the reporting clause.

## Reporting clause after a question or exclamation

“Do you want a cake?” he asked.

question mark

“Hurry up!” he shouted.

exclamation mark

If the reporting clause is after a question or exclamation:

We write the exact words inside the inverted commas.

The first letter is a capital letter.

We write a question mark (?) before the closing inverted commas.

or

We write an exclamation mark (!) before the closing inverted commas.

We write a full stop (.) at the end of the reporting clause.

## Advanced rules for direct speech

Sometimes we break up the direct speech into 2 parts:

“If you come to London,” she said, “then call me.”

reporting clause      small letter

The second part of the direct speech starts with a small letter if it is the same sentence as the first part of the direct speech.

“I'm tired,” she said, “Let's stay at home.”

reporting clause      capital letter

The second part of the direct speech starts with a capital letter if it is a new sentence.