Direct and Indirect Speech

There are two main ways of reporting people's words, thoughts, beliefs etc.

Direct speech

We can give the exact words that were said. This kind of reporting is called direct speech.

She said, 'What do you want?'
Peter said, 'It is not my fault.'
Jane said, 'Are you coming with me?'
He said, 'I don't want to talk to you.'
Monica says, 'You look beautiful.'
Mother said, 'Stop talking.'

Indirect speech

We can report a speaker's thoughts and words in our own words, using conjunctions and changing pronouns, tenses and other words where necessary. This kind of reporting is called indirect speech.

She asked what I wanted.
Peter said that it was not his fault.
Jane asked me if was going with her?
He said that he didn't want to talk to me.
Monica says that I look beautiful.
Mother asked her children to stop talking.

Basic rules for indirect speech

In indirect speech, words spoken by one person is reported in another place at a different time by a different person. Because of this, there are many grammatical differences between direct and indirect speech. It is not necessary to learn complicated rules about indirect speech in English, because most of the changes are natural and logical.