

The Grammar of Spoken English

In this lesson...

In this lesson we will look at:

- question tags
- emphasis
- inserts
- sentence adverbs
- ellipsis
- reported speech

The Grammar of Spoken English

- Spoken English, like academic or formal English, has a range of features. Today we will look at:
 - question tags
 - emphasis
 - inserts
 - stance and sentence adverbs
 - ellipsis

Inserts

- well
- right / all right
- I mean
- you know
- now
- OK
- er, um, like
- mmmm
- really?
- right, yeah

Used by speaker

Used by listener

Grammar Lab
p. 355

Question tags

You know what a question tag is, don't you?

Question tags are added to the end of a statement to turn it into a question. We use them to:

- confirm something we think we already know
- to ask for information
- to make a request

We can add:

- do / does / did (present / past simple tenses)
- a form of 'to be'
- have / has / had
- a modal verb

Question tags

In most cases, when the sentence is positive, we use a negative form in the tag.
When the sentence is negative, we use a positive form in the tag.

John isn't experienced enough for this job, is he?

You're staying away for two weeks, aren't you?

If a positive sentence has a negative or restrictive adverb eg. scarcely / hardly / never, then it takes a positive tag.

There was hardly enough food at the wedding, was there?

Question tags

Tags after...	Example
I am	I'm still going to the party, <u>aren't</u> I?
may / might	It may rain tomorrow, <u>mightn't</u> it?
must / can't have	He must have taken it, <u>mustn't</u> he? He can't have taken it, <u>can</u> he?
ought to	I ought to get her a present, <u>oughtn't</u> I?
Let's	Let's try that again, <u>shall</u> we?
Nobody / everybody	Nobody likes Chris, <u>do they</u> ? Everybody loves Raymond, <u>don't they</u> ?

Question tags

Add question tags to these statements

In pairs / threes
5 mins

- 1) There's nothing on TV tonight,
- 2) You really like swimming,
- 3) I don't need to pay in advance,
- 4) He hasn't been to Paris,
- 5) I'm still part of the team,...
- 6) We should leave now,
- 7) It might be fine tomorrow,
- 8) Let's try that new restaurant,....
- 9) They can't have seen the new film already, ...
- 10) Nobody has phoned,...

'Do' for emphasis

In the present / past simple we can emphasise a clause or sentence by adding a stressed do / does / did before the main verb.

It's often used for contrast or to state something unexpected / contrary.

I never drink coffee, but I do drink tea.

We did try our best to fulfil all requests.

She doesn't remember much about school, but she does remember the playground.

We can also add 'do / does / did' before an imperative.

Do be careful!

'Do' for emphasis

Add do/ does / did for emphasis.

- 1) I love summer, but I hate winter.
- 2) He goes on a bit, doesn't he?
- 3) Your father always loved cricket.
- 4) I don't speak Chinese but speak Polish.
- 5) I know it doesn't look like it, but I work hard.
- 6) Make sure you're home by midnight!

Prefaces and tags

We often add extra information in a conversation.

We might repeat the subject of a sentence by adding an additional word at the beginning (preface) or at the end (a tag).

She's my best friend → Emma, she's my best friend.

What is the restaurant called? → That restaurant, what's it called?

Where does he live? → Where does he live, that guy?

It's a great movie → It's a great movie, this one.

Ellipsis

The opposite is also true in spoken English, sometimes we leave out words.

These are often:

- auxiliary verbs
- subject with be / will
- question forms
- subject 'I'
- articles
- it and there

Ellipsis

○ Write these sentences with an ellipsis. Which elements can you cut?

1. How are you feeling today?
2. The taxi's here.
3. Have you got the time?
4. I'm not sure about that.
5. Is there anyone home?
6. I don't think so.

auxiliary verbs
subject with be / will
question forms
subject 'I'
articles
it and there

Sentence adverbs

- In conversation, we use sentence adverbs on an adverbial phrase to comment, introduce or extend a sentence.

Incidentally, I noticed they were looking for new players down at the club.

By the way, I noticed they were looking for new players down at the club

I thought the film was pretty boring, **frankly**.

Sentence adverbs

Choose the best adverb for the sentence.

I heard that Phil is moving to Dallas.

What are you doing this evening?

I could have tried a little harder.

I don't know what she sees in him.

He was really annoyed when they fired him at no notice.

I had just enough petrol to get to the petrol station.

understandably

anyway

luckily

admittedly

to be honest

by the way

Transcript





Now have a look at the transcript of the podcast.

Fill in the gaps and find examples of at least one example of the following features of spoken English.

1. Insert
2. Question tag
3. Do for emphasis
4. Sentence adverb
5. Ellipsis

Direct speech

Intonation

- Got the keys? 
- You like football, don't you Dan? 
- Do you like chocolate? 
- What are doing this summer? 




General Rules

○ Got the keys? 

○ You like football, don't you Dan? 

○ Do you like chocolate? 

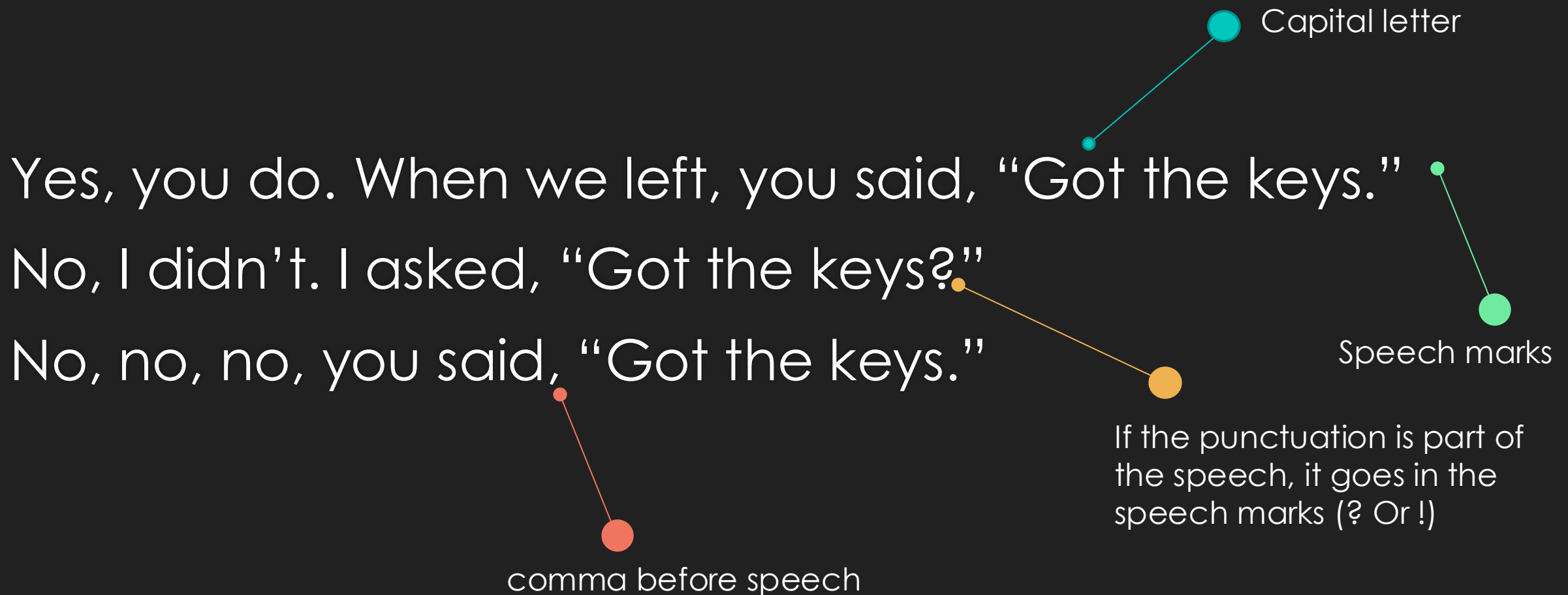
○ What are doing this summer? 

 Yes/no question
 Wh- question
 Tag question

Direct and Reported Speech

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
Repeats what somebody said	Reports what somebody said
Uses speech marks	Changes the tense
Uses reporting phrase	Changes the subject and pronouns
Keeps all words the same	May change time phrases

Punctuation for Direct Speech



Punctuation for Direct Speech

This is the reporting phrase

“Got the keys,” said Monica.

Monica asked, “Got the keys?”

“We’re waiting for you to open the door,” said Rachel,

“You’ve got the keys.”

Full stop in the speech marks.

You may not need a capital here if a sentence is interrupted.

Reported Speech

Reported Speech

Present
simple

"Got the keys," said Monica. → Monica said she had the keys.

Past
simple

(have you) got

You may need to clarify
a subject

"Got the keys?" asked Monica. → Monica asked Rachel if she had (got) the keys.

Open question

Use question word + **no auxiliary** (statement form)

Closed question (yes/no)
if / whether

"How often does that happen?" asked Chandler. → Chandler asked how often that happened.

Reported Speech: Tenses

I love the <i>Toy Story</i> films.	She said she loved the <i>Toy Story</i> films
I worked as a waiter.	
I have been to France.	
I am walking there now.	
We have been painting the kitchen.	
It was raining all day.	
I'd tried everything!	
I go to the gym near school.	

5 mins
In pairs/threes

Backshifting: special cases

Put these sentences in reported speech. Is there more than one option for any of them?

1. "In the end, all that fuss was over nothing because we had arrived an hour early!"
 2. "I wish I were younger," said Janice.
 3. "I'm going to join you," said Tom.
 4. "I'm still working on a statement," said the negotiator.
 5. "Dinosaurs roamed the earth millions of years ago," explained the museum guide.
 6. "I started the job immediately after I left school," he said.
1. They said that in the end all the fuss had been over nothing because they **had arrived** an hour early.
 2. Janice said she wished she **were** younger.
 3. Tom said that **he's going** to join us. **OR** Tom said **he was going** to join us.
 4. The negotiator said that she was still working on a statement **OR** The negotiator said/says that she is still working on a statement.
 5. The guide explained that dinosaurs **(had)** roamed the earth millions of years ago.
 6. He said he had started the school immediately after he **(had)** left school.

No Backshift

- The reporting verb is past perfect.
They said they had arrived an hour early.
- When the direct speech includes an 'unreal' past
Janice said that she wished she were younger.
~~*Janice said that she wished she had been younger.*~~
- When the reporting verb is in the present tense.
*He says these fish **don't survive** in salt water.*
~~*He says these fish didn't survive in salt water.*~~

Obligatory Backshift

- We **have to** change the tense if we no longer believe the direct speech statement is true:

Where's Tom?

He said he was going to join us, but I don't think he will.

- If we believe something is **still true**, we don't have to change the tense:

Where's Tom?

He said he's going to join us later.

He said he was going to join us later.

Optional Backshifts

- If the reported action is still in progress or going to happen.

*The negotiator said/says he **is working** on a tentative statement.*

*The negotiator said he **was working** on a tentative statement.*

- If the reported verb expresses something that cannot or is unlikely to change:

*He explained that dinosaurs **roamed** the earth millions of years ago.*

*He explained that dinosaurs **had roamed** the earth millions of years ago.*

- The reported verb comes after a time conjunction, eg. when / after.

*He replied that he had started the job immediately **after he left** school.*

*He replied that he had started the job immediately **after he had left** school.*

Say, tell, ask

Say / tell

You say, "Yes," I say, "No."

You say, "Stop," and I say "Go, go, go"

You say, "Goodbye," and I say, "Hello"

focus on content of words

no indirect object

Say my name, say my name

If no one is around you

Say, "Baby, I love you"

If you ain't runnin' game

Tell her about it, tell her everything you feel

Give her every reason to accept that you're for real

Tell her about it, tell her all your crazy dreams

focus on message

needs an indirect object

I've been waiting all night for you

to tell me what you want

Tell me, tell me that you need me

Say / Tell

to say

Focuses on the **content** of the words.

1. She said she knew what it was to be mad.
2. She said that she knew what it was to be mad.

reported clause =
direct object

No indirect
object

'that' is
optional

to tell

Focuses on the overall **message**.

1. I told her I loved her.
2. I told her that I loved her.
3. I told her not to run with scissors.

reported clause =
direct object

Needs an
indirect object

'that' is
optional

'tell someone
+(not) to'
for commands

Ask

to ask

Questions / requests

Optional indirect
object

1. She asked me to marry her.

infinitive

2. He asked (me) if I liked the soup.

questions

3. The security guard asked (me) what I was doing

4. I always ask (the pizza place) for extra olives on my pizza.

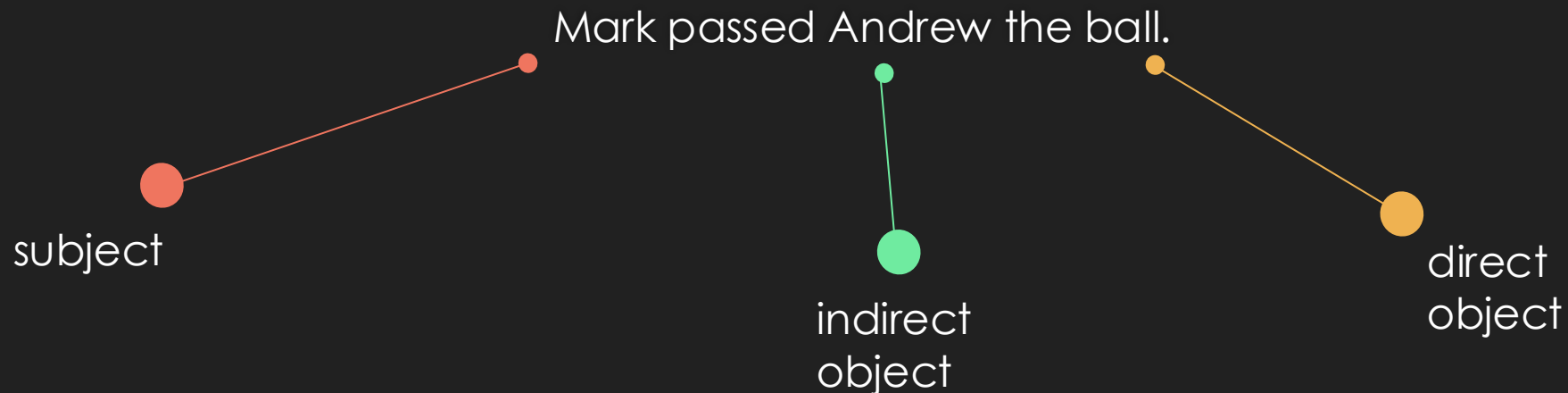
request + noun

- 1) "What do you want for dinner?" (ask)
- 2) "Is chicken ok?" (ask)
- 3) His first day of school (tell)
- 4) "You look nice" (say)

Using reporting verbs

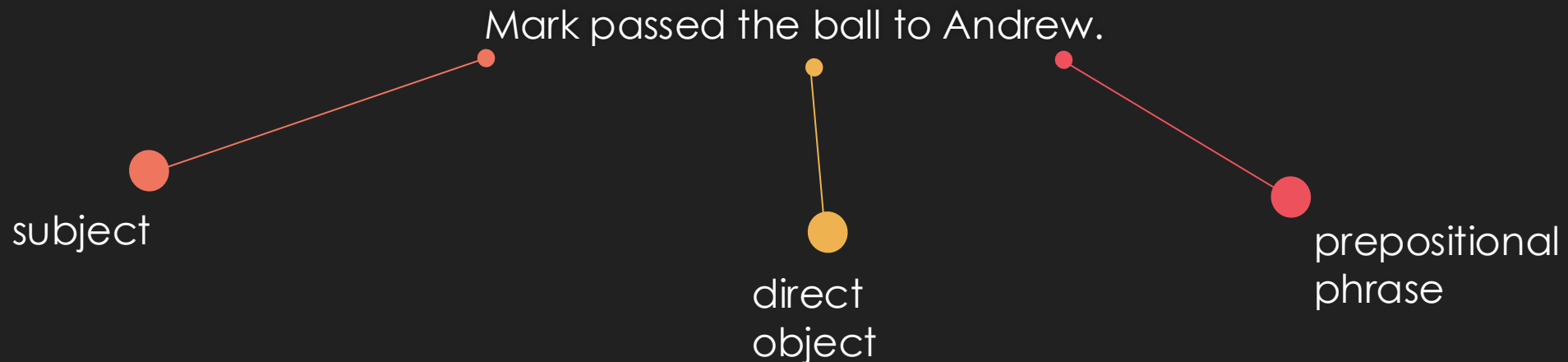
Indirect Objects + Direct Objects

- A direct object = the noun / noun phrase that receives the action of the verb.
- An indirect object = the noun / noun phrase that receives the direct object itself.



Indirect Objects + Direct Objects

- A direct object = the noun / noun phrase that receives the action of the verb.
- Prepositional phrase = begins with a preposition and ends with a noun / pronoun



Indirect Objects + Direct Objects

some verbs have an optional indirect object

Mark passed Andrew the ball.
Mark passed the ball to Andrew.
Mark passed the ball.

some verbs need an indirect object.

I told her I loved her.
~~I told to her I loved her.~~
~~I told I loved her.~~

reported clause = direct object

some verbs can only take a prepositional phrase (to + noun / pronoun)

I explained the Maths problem to her.
I explained the Maths problem.
~~I explained her the Maths problem.~~

Transitive, Intransitive and Ditransitive Verbs

Transitive verbs require a **direct object** to make sense.

*They pushed **the canoe**.*


Intransitive verbs don't require a direct object.

She stood up.

Ditransitive verbs take a **direct object** AND an **indirect object** / **object complement**.

*She told **him** **a secret**.*

*She named **the rabbit** **Peter**.*



an object
complement
renames or
describes the object

Explain / Confess

to explain

1. The receptionist explained (that) the doctor was out.
2. Can you explain this maths problem **to me**?
3. He explained how he'd build his own house

No indirect object

optional that

explain + noun + prepositional phrase

explain + question word

to confess

1. He confessed (that) he had killed him.
2. He confessed to the murder.
3. He confessed to murdering him.
4. He confessed the murder **to me**.

No indirect object

optional 'that'

confess to something

confess + noun + prepositional phrase

Explain / Confess

Use the words to write reported statements. Start with the underlined word.

1. He that he a explained made had mistake.
2. To confessed burglary He the .
3. the confessed famous murdering She to actor.
4. got you Can how here explain you?
5. again the explained to homework The teacher him.
6. *Dirty Dancing* that confessed He he loved.

4 mins
In pairs / threes

Promise / Vow

to vow

1. She vowed (that) she would get revenge.
2. She vowed **to** get revenge.

optional 'that'

+ infinitive

to promise

1. I promised (that) would be there
2. I promised to be there!
3. I promised her (that) I would be there.

optional (that)

+ infinitive

optional
indirect object

Promise / Vow

Report these sentences using “to vow” / “to promise”

1. “You’ll never go hungry again!”
2. “I won’t rest until he’s behind bars!”
3. “I’ll never speak to him again.”
4. “I’ll come to your birthday party.”
5. “I’ll get my revenge on them all!”

‘vow’ is more serious than ‘promise’

4 mins
In pairs / threes

Common Reporting Verbs

indirect object

to reassure

1. She reassured me about the exam.
2. She reassured me (that) the exam would go well.

optional 'that'

to advise

1. The lawyer advised him not to answer that.
2. The lawyer advised him to co-operate.

+ to / not to

to warn

1. The lawyer warned him about the police officer.
2. The lawyer warned him not to answer that.

Looking up reporting verbs

If you need to look up a verb pattern or preposition, you can often find it in a dictionary:

reassure *verb*



/,ri:ə'ʃʊə(r)/, /,ri:ə'ʃɔ:(r)/

/,ri:ə'ʃʊr/

+ Verb Forms

★ to say or do something that makes somebody less frightened or worried

SYNONYM [put/set somebody's mind at ease/rest](#)

- **reassure somebody (about something)** *They tried to reassure her, but she still felt anxious.*
- **reassure somebody that...** *The doctor reassured him that there was nothing seriously wrong.*
- **be reassured of something** *She needed to be reassured of his love for her.*

Homework

- Choose a dialogue from a TV show or film and tell us what happens. Use reported speech.
- Try to vary your reporting verbs.
- Use functional reporting verbs to paraphrase where you can. (eg. she said sorry → she apologized).
- Make sure you use the same tense throughout!
- Check your reporting verbs and word order.