

# Teaching Reporting Verbs to ESL Students

By Keith Taylor

The most common verbs we use to report what someone says are "say" and "tell". These are the verbs which students learn first when they learn reported speech. These are fine, of course, but there will come a time in your students' learning when they want to use other verbs to more accurately report what someone says.

We use many different reporting verbs in English, and the way we use them in a sentence varies, for example:

Verb + gerund: *James denied taking the money.*

Verb + preposition + gerund: *They apologized for arriving late.*

Verb + infinitive: *Susan promised to work hard.*

## Task 1. Read the story and answer the questions using reporting verbs.

7 year old Adam was leaving school one afternoon when he saw a group of older boys, aged 8, smoking. One of them, Chris, said 'Hey, Adam, have a drag of this'. *What did Chris do?.....*

'No, I don't want to', Adam replied. *What did Adam do?.....*

'Go on. It's really good', said Chris, and then Trevor said 'I smoke 5 a day.' *What did Chris do? And Trevor? .....*

'Go on. You'll like it and you can join our gang', said Chris.

'Well, OK then', said Adam. *What did Chris do? And Adam? .....*

Adam coughed and coughed and he felt sick. On his way home he stopped to buy some mints to get rid of the smell. But when he got home Mummy was waiting for him and she gave him a big kiss.

'Adam. You've been smoking!' she said. *What did Mummy do? .....*

'No, I haven't.' *What did Adam do? .....*

'Tell me the truth Adam.'

'OK, I did smoke, but only a little.' *What did Adam do? .....*

'Adam, if you ever smoke again I'll tell Daddy.' *What did Mummy do? .....*

'No Mummy, please don't tell Daddy. I'm really sorry. I'll never smoke again.' *What did Adam do? .....*

'OK, Adam. You shouldn't listen to those naughty boys. Now, why don't you go upstairs and do your homework?' *What did Mummy do? .....*

**Task 2. There are some reporting verbs. Divide them into columns according to the pattern they use.**

remind	promise	blame	deny	admit
encourage	offer	congratulate	apologize	accuse
recommend	invite	refuse	advise	insist
suggest	threaten	warn	agree	decide
add	emphasise	affirm	argue	claim

<b>verb object infinitive</b>	<b>verb infinitive</b>	<b>verb (that)</b>	<b>verb gerund</b>	<b>verb object preposition gerund</b>	<b>verb preposition gerund</b>
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**Task 3. A role-play. Work in the groups of 3 – 4.** You are friends who share a house, but you have been living together for some time, and your habits are starting to annoy each other. You are going to have a house meeting to discuss your grievances!

If a student has slips of paper with, for example, "deny", "accuse" and "apologise", (s)he must deny doing something, accuse someone of doing something and apologise for doing something.

Model activity: "Mario, you're always leaving your laundry on the floor." "Elena, if you don't stop playing loud music at 2am, I'll throw your stereo out of the window." Ask the students what you said. (You accused David of leaving his laundry on the floor. You threatened to throw Elena's stereo out of the window.)

**Reporting. Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Don't change the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given.**

1 „You put that frog on my chair, didn't you, Charlie?“ said Sally. **of**

Sally .....that frog on her chair.

2 „Stop misbehaving or you'll be sent to the head,“ the teacher said to Johnny. **warned**

The teacher .....or he would be sent to the head.

3. At the interview, Kate was asked how well she had done in her exams. **did**

The interviewer asked Kate,“ How well .....in your exams?“

4. „Please try to stay awake during the lesson,“ the teacher told them. **urged**

The teacher.....asleep during the lesson.

5. Susan denied wasting her time at school when she was younger. **said**

Susan.....her time at school when she was younger.

6. „Have you tidied up in the science lab?“ the headmaster asked them. **tidied**

The headmaster wanted to know.....in the science lab.

7. „I'm sorry, I've forgotten my homework,“ Nicholas said. **apologised**

Nicholas.....his homework.

8. Stephen told me he would see me the next day at the lecture. **see**

„I .....at the lecture,“ Stephen said.