

Reported commands and requests: tell and ask

CEFR B1 · 20 questions · A4 / US Letter

A reported command takes told plus a person plus to. A reported request takes asked plus a person plus to. The infinitive never backshifts.

The rule

Commands: told plus person plus to

- Direct: "Sit down." Reported: "The teacher told us to sit down."
- The pattern is tell plus person plus to plus base verb.
- Tell needs a person. "She told to wait" is incomplete; "She told me to wait" is correct.
- The infinitive does not change tense: told me to go works for any time frame.

Requests: asked plus person plus to

- Direct: "Please help me." Reported: "She asked me to help her."
- Ask can also report a question, but with an infinitive it reports a request.
- More formal reporting verbs fit the same pattern: request, beg, urge.
- The pronoun changes follow the usual logic: me becomes her when the speaker reports it.

Negative commands and requests

- Put not before to: "Do not be late" becomes "She told us not to be late."
- Never put not after to: "told us to not be late" is unnatural.
- The same negative pattern works with requests: "He asked me not to call after ten."
- With never, the form is never to plus the verb: "She told him never to return."

Other reporting verbs

- Warn takes the same shape: "The guard warned us not to touch the fence."
- Remind and advise also take person plus to: "He reminded me to bring a pen."
- Order and command belong to formal or military contexts: "The officer ordered them to stop."
- Suggest does not follow this pattern. Use suggest plus a gerund or suggest that plus a clause.

Say and tell

- Tell takes a person directly: tell me, tell the class, tell him.
- Say does not take a person this way: "He said me to go" is wrong.
- With say, report the command as a clause: "He said that I should go."
- When in doubt, use tell for orders and say for information.

Questions

Write your answer on the line under each question. Check your work with the answer key on the last page.

1. Close the door. — She ___ me to close the door.

2. Please wait outside. — He ___ us to wait outside.

3. Do not touch the wires. — The technician told us ___ the wires.

4. Could you send the file? — She asked me ___ the file.

5. Take an umbrella. — He advised me ___ an umbrella.

6. Remember the keys. — She reminded me ___ the keys.

7. Do not be late again. — The coach warned him ___ late again.

8. Stop the car. — The officer ordered them ___ the car.

9. Let us take a break. — She suggested ___ a break.

10. He said, "I will call you." — He said he ___ call me.

11. Wait here. — They told me ___ there.

12. Do not smoke here. — She asked us ___ here.

13. Could you open the window? — He asked me ___ the window.

14. She said me to wait. Which sentence fixes the mistake?

15. Finish your homework. — My mother told me ___ my homework.

16. Do not forget your passport. — He reminded me ___ my passport.

17. Please do not call after ten. — She asked me ___ after ten.

18. Clean your room. — He told me ___ my room.

19. Can you help me? — She asked me ___ her.

20. Do not run in the corridor. — The teacher told the children ___ in the corridor.

Answer key

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1. **told** — A reported command takes told plus the person plus to, so told me to close is correct.
2. **asked** — A polite request is reported with asked plus the person plus to.
3. **not to touch** — The negative of a reported command places not before to: not to touch.
4. **to send** — A reported request uses the infinitive to send after asked me.
5. **to take** — Advise follows the person plus to pattern in reported speech.
6. **to take** — Remind reports the reminder with to plus the base verb.
7. **not to be** — Warn plus not to reports the negative warning.
8. **to stop** — Order takes the person plus to pattern for a formal command.
9. **taking** — Suggest takes a gerund, not the reported command pattern of told plus person plus to.
10. **would** — Say reports information in a clause, and will backshifts to would.
11. **to wait** — The reported command uses told plus person plus to wait.
12. **not to smoke** — The negative request places not before to.
13. **to open** — A reported request takes asked me to plus the base verb.
14. **She told me to wait.** — Say does not take a person plus to, so the reported command uses told me to wait.
15. **to finish** — The command becomes told me to finish, with the infinitive unchanged.
16. **not to forget** — Remind with a negative reminder uses not to forget.
17. **not to call** — The reported request keeps the negative before to: not to call.
18. **to clean** — A direct command is reported with told plus person plus to clean.
19. **to help** — The reported request takes asked me to help.
20. **not to run** — A negative command in reported speech uses told plus person plus not to run.