

15.2 'Say', 'tell' and 'ask'

15.2A 'Say', 'tell' and 'ask' [> LEG 15.5-9]

Study:

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- 1 The commonest reporting verbs in both direct and indirect speech are: *say*, *tell* and *ask*.
- 2 We must always use a personal indirect object after *tell* (*tell somebody ...*):
He told me he was tired. (Not **told to me**) **John told his mother he was going out.**
We can use *to me*, etc. after *say* if we want to, but we can't say **He said me** [> 1.3B]:
'You haven't got much time,' he said (to me). or: ... *he told me.* Not **he said me/he told**
- 3 We can use *me*, etc. after *ask* if we want to: *'Are you comfortable?'* **he asked (me).**

Write:

Choose the correct word from those in brackets to fill the blank in each sentence.

- 1 He often *says* things like that. (says/tells)
- 2 She always me her troubles. (says/tells)
- 3 The children always me if they can go out to play. (tell/ask)
- 4 They me to leave. (said/asked)
- 5 'Don't do that!' she to them. (said/told/asked)
- 6 'They've arrived,' she (said/told/asked)
- 7 'How are you both?' she (told/asked)
- 8 I that I didn't know what to do. (said/told/asked)
- 9 She me she didn't know what to do. (said/told/asked)
- 10 They if I knew what to do. (said/told/asked)
- 11 The nurse him whether he needed anything else. (said/told/asked)
- 12 Did he you where you came from? (say/ask)
- 13 Did she you where she had put my books? (say/tell)
- 14 The policeman us where we were going. (said/told/asked)
- 15 He didn't me how long the job would take. (say/tell)
- 16 'There's no match on Saturday.' – 'Who so?' (says/tells/asks)
- 17 'You were right. Those curtains look terrible!' – 'I you so!' (said/told/asked)
- 18 When I was introduced to the Princess, she a few words to me. (said/told)
- 19 That little boy's very bad. He a lot of lies. (says/tells)
- 20 'How much are those bananas?' – 'I've got no idea. Go and the price.' (say/tell/ask)

15.2B Fixed expressions with 'say', 'tell' and 'ask' [> LEG 15.7.2]

Study:

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There are many common expressions with *say*, *tell* and *ask*, for example:

say: *say a few words, say so, say no more, say nothing, say your prayers*

tell: *tell a lie, tell a story, tell you so, tell the time, tell the truth*

ask: *ask after someone, ask (for) a favour, ask a question, ask the price*

Write:

Supply the missing phrases with *say*, *tell* and *ask*.

- 1 Don't say *'I told you so'* now that the worst has happened.
- 2 Don't offer to buy it. first.
- 3 You've told me more than I need to know.
- 4 If you need money, why don't you a loan?
- 5 Don't tell them anything.
- 6 'Who?' – 'I say so!'
- 7 When did your son learn to?
- 8 I did it. I cannot