

How to gossip

In this lesson you will learn useful language for passing on information informally.

Starter

- 25.1
- 1 Listen to two short dialogues and answer the questions.
 - 1 What is the subject of each conversation?
 - 2 Is this information necessary for the speakers' work?
 - 2 How would you define *gossip*? Is there a lot of gossip in your workplace?



Expressions

- 25.2
- 1 Listen to four dialogues where colleagues talk about gossip and answer the questions.
 - 1 Why did Juan and Christa argue?
 - 2 Why do the speakers think Mike is in charge of the new project?
 - 3 Why is Sarah being laid off?
 - 4 Why was Tony's expenses claim high?
 - 2 Listen again and complete the table. In each dialogue, how does the person introduce the gossip? How does the listener show interest?

Introduce gossip

Show interest

Dialogue 1

Dialogue 2

Dialogue 3

Dialogue 4

Speaking

- 25.3
- 1 Listen to the conversation between two of your colleagues: a workplace trainer and his manager.
 - 2 Imagine you overheard this conversation and now want to pass on what you heard to another colleague of yours. Role-play the situation with your teacher.
 - 3 You want to pass on some gossip. Tell your colleague (your teacher) the gossip below. Add details to make it sound interesting.
 - Your office will be relocated.
 - Two of your colleagues had a row at the Christmas party.
 - One of your colleagues has just bought a very expensive new car.

Language box

As gossip often involves passing on information from someone else, reported speech is frequently used. Remember the main rules of reported speech. The tense usually changes (one step back):

The company is closing down. → The director said that the company was closing down.

I've been working here for three years.

→ She said she had been working there for three years.

We'll finish the research.

→ They said they would finish the research.

The tense does not change in the second and third conditional and in sentences with *I wish*, etc.:

If Ken showed more enthusiasm, he might get promoted. → Beryl said that if Ken showed more enthusiasm, he might get promoted.

Hint

There are many phrases used to show that the information passed on is confidential.

Between you and me she's handed in her notice. We'll be able to take you on next month – but this information is off the record at the moment.

Hint

Remember that word order changes in reported questions.

What time will you finish work? → He asked me what time I'd finish work.

Not He asked me what time would I finish work.

25.2

3 Correct the mistakes in the sentences. Then listen again to check your answers.

- Dialogue 1 Juan had phoned the client when Christa was on holiday.
- Dialogue 2 Mike's going to be in charge of the new department.
- Dialogue 3 Pete practically begged Sarah to stay and offered her overtime.
- Dialogue 4 After Tony's last trip the boss had said his expenses were fine.



Writing

- 1 You receive the following email from your former colleague, Kelly, who you are still on friendly terms with. Write a suitable reply telling her what has been happening at work since she left. Try to use language from **Expressions and the Language box**.

Hi!

Thought I'd drop you a line as I have a quiet moment in the office.

I can't believe it's already two months since I left! Time's been flying by and I feel like I've been here forever. It's quite a different set-up from the old place, but everyone's really friendly and I usually have lots to do to keep me busy. I do miss my old job and colleagues though. Hope you're all well, and surviving without me! ☺

So, what's been happening there? Any news? Write and tell me all the gossip – especially about Jack and Anna! And about the supposed changes we were always hearing about.

We must get together for a coffee as well, when you have time. Well, better get back to work. Hope to hear from you soon.

All the best,
Kelly

The tense does not change if the fact is still true or reported soon after the direct speech:

Costs are too high.
→ The boss said that costs are too high.

We can use a reporting verb rather than repeating the message word for word:

Heikki said that he wouldn't leave.
→ Heikki refused to leave.

The suppliers said that we broke the vases.
→ The suppliers accused us of breaking the vases.

Look

Look at listening scripts 25.1 and 25.2 on page 132. Find more examples of reported speech and reporting verbs.

Lesson record

3 new words from this lesson

3 useful phrases from this lesson

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| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |

Things to remember

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