

Reported questions and commands

English B2

What this topic teaches

B1 taught you to report statements and questions. B2 adds the reporting of **commands, requests, advice and suggestions** – everything people say to move other people.

- “Open the window.” → She **told** me **to open** the window.
- “Could you help me?” → He **asked** me **to help** him.
- “Don’t be late.” → They **warned** me **not to be** late.
- Memory hook: commands and requests report as **verb + person + to-infinitive**. The imperative takes off its shouting cap and puts on *to*.

The command verbs: tell, ask, order, warn, advise

Verb	The original	The report
tell	“Open the window.”	She told me to open the window.
ask	“Could you help me?”	He asked me to help him.
order	“Stand up!”	The teacher ordered us to stand up.
warn	“Don’t touch that.”	They warned me not to touch it.
advise	“You should sleep.”	She advised me to sleep more.

- The negative parks *not before* the *to*: *warned me **not to touch***. Never “*to not touch*” in careful writing – and absolutely never “*not to not*”; even grammar has a headache limit.
- *tell* = a command from someone with authority ; *ask* = a request; *order* = strong authority; *warn* = danger ahead; *advise* = friendly wisdom. The verb you choose reports the **mood**, not just the words.

Reporting questions, fully grown

B1 gave you *if/whether* and the statement order. B2 completes the picture:

- Yes/no: “Are you ready?” → She asked **if** I **was** ready. (also **whether** – the formal twin.)
- Wh-questions: “Where have you been?” → He asked me **where** I **had been**. – question word kept, order flipped to statement, tense stepped back.
- Polite requests: “Could you open the window?” → She asked me **to open** it. – a request reports like a gentle command.
- △ The flip still stays home: never “He asked where had I been.” The reported question is a statement in a question’s hat – the B1 rule, now with a perfect inside.

suggest and the machinery of ideas

suggest reports ideas, and it has its own grammar.

- “Let’s eat noodles.” → She suggested **eating** noodles. – *suggest* + gerund .
- Or: She suggested **that we eat** noodles. (formal; the subjunctive *eat*, not *eats* – a fossil worth recognising, not memorising.)
- △ Never “She suggested me to eat noodles” × – *suggest* refuses the *person + to* structure. *advise* allows it; *suggest* doesn’t. They are cousins, not twins.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- △ **tell needs its person; said doesn’t.** “She told to open the window” × – She told **me** to open it. (Or She said to open it, informal.)
- △ **The not position.** “He warned me to not be late” is heard in speech, but careful writing puts *not* before *to*: warned me **not to be** late.
- △ **Don’t report commands with a that-clause alone.** “She told that I open the window” ×. Commands report through the infinitive: told me **to open** it.
- △ **The step-back still applies inside questions.** He asked where I **had been** – not “where have I been”. The retelling moves house; everything steps back.

Say it aloud

Report the classroom’s commands, requests and wisdom.

- “Sit down.” → The teacher told us to sit down. (We were already sitting. She had seen the future.)
- “Could you lend me a pen?” → He asked me to lend him a pen. The pen economy is booming.
- “Don’t eat in the lab.” → They warned us not to eat in the lab. The lab noodles were worth it.
- “Let’s review the conditionals.” → She suggested reviewing the conditionals. Wise. The lamp agrees.

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. “*Open the window.*” → **She told me to open the window.** Command: verb + person + to-infinitive.
2. “*Don’t be late.*” → **They warned me not to be late.** *not* parks before *to*.
3. “*Where have you been?*” → **He asked me where I had been.** Statement order, stepped back.
4. “*Let’s eat noodles.*” → **She suggested eating noodles.** *suggest* + gerund; never *suggested me to eat*.
5. “*Could you help me?*” → **He asked me to help him.** A polite request reports as a gentle command.