

Test Your Grammar Skills

Say, Tell, Talk, or Speak? 1

say and **tell** have different uses in English:

5 forms: say / says / said / said / saying	5 forms: tell / tells / told / told / telling
say <i>something</i> to <i>somebody</i>	tell <i>somebody something</i>
object is a thing, e.g. 'say something'	object is a person, e.g. 'tell me'
more general target: say sth to people in general	more specific target: tell sby something specific
used in direct speech: "Good morning," said John. and reported speech: John said good morning.	tell: information, opinion, problem, order, secret, lie, gossip, joke, the time, tales

talk and **speak** are physical actions. Their meanings are quite similar, with a few key differences:

5 forms: talk / talks / talked / talked / talking	5 forms: speak / speaks / spoke / spoken / speaking
talk to <i>somebody</i> about <i>something</i>	speak to <i>somebody</i> about <i>something</i>
more informal: talk with family and friends	more formal: speak with people in authority and groups
more common in spoken English	less common – occurs in fewer situations
talk about anything: our family, work, feelings, problems, plans, etc.	speak about important matters, issues, situations speak a language

Complete each gap with **say**, **tell**, **talk**, or **speak** in the appropriate form:

- Generally _____, there will be room for around a hundred guests at the wedding.
- Look, would you just _____ me the truth about Brian, please?
- 'And then she told me to get lost!' 'What an awful thing to _____!'
- When Janet resigned in front of the board, I was so shocked I could hardly _____!
- Robbie _____ a joke in class, but nobody saw the funny side of it.
- Could you _____ up a bit, please? I'm a bit deaf.
- I'll give you the stuffing with the turkey for free. Now, I can't _____ fairer than that.
- 'John said the company is close to collapse!' 'No! He's _____ utter rubbish.'
- It's vital that I _____ to my doctor about the test results that I got.
- Peter _____ good morning to Alice when he met her in the car park.
- Darren has really enjoyed _____ to his kids on the way home from Scotland.
- 'You can't park here, mate.' 'OK, whatever you _____.'
- Just stop _____ me what to do!
- When the plane had finally landed, we got in a taxi and _____ for hours.
- My sister was _____ on the phone to her music teacher for half an hour.
- I was trying to _____ them about the paintings, but they preferred the gift shop.
- Geoff? Good. Phil here. OK. We need to _____ business.
- OK, everyone get ready. I'm going to take the picture. _____ cheese!
- I didn't know that you _____ Norwegian fluently.
- The grass snake was as big as a python – I'm _____ you!

For more fun worksheets, games, and quizzes log onto www.englishbanana.com now!

This worksheet can be photocopied and used without charge