Say vs Tell — Worksheet

30 exercises · Level B1–B2 · Answer key on the last page Free for classroom use

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Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

Choose the correct option (a–d) for each gap or question. Check yourself with the answer key on the last page.

1. Excuse me, can you _____ me the way to the station, please?
   a) say b) speak c) explain d) tell

2. She _____ that the train was running twenty minutes late.
   a) said b) told c) spoke d) talked

3. My brother _____ me a secret last night, but I can't repeat it.
   a) said b) told c) spoke d) talked

4. What did he _____ to you after the meeting?
   a) said b) talk c) say d) told

5. Has anyone _____ you about the new parking rules?
   a) said b) tell c) talked d) told

6. We _____ goodbye at the airport and promised to write to each other.
   a) said b) told c) spoke d) talked

7. Please don't _____ anyone about the surprise party for Maria.
   a) say b) speak c) talk d) tell

8. Yesterday the doctor _____ me to rest for a few days.
   a) said b) told c) tells d) has told

9. He never _____ sorry, even when he is clearly wrong.
   a) tells b) speaks c) says d) talks

10. I've _____ you a hundred times — close the door when you go out!
    a) said b) told c) tell d) telled

11. I know you're not being honest with me — just _____ the truth.
    a) say b) talk c) tell d) make

12. My grandfather loves to _____ stories about his childhood in the village.
    a) say b) tell c) speak d) talk

13. My little sister is only five, but she can already _____ the time on our kitchen clock.
    a) say b) speak c) talk d) tell

14. The twins look so alike that I can't _____ the difference between them.
    a) say b) tell c) speak d) talk

15. Everyone laughed when Sam _____ a joke about his first day at work.
a) told b) said c) telled d) spoke

16. Don't forget to _____ thank you to your aunt for the present.
a) tell b) speak c) say d) talk

17. The guide _____ us to stay close together in the old town.
a) said b) explained c) spoke d) told

18. My manager _____ me not to worry about the mistake.
a) told b) said c) spoke d) talked

19. When I asked her to marry me, she _____ yes straight away.
a) told b) talked c) spoke d) said

20. She _____ to me that she was thinking of moving abroad.
a) said b) told c) talked d) spoke

21. She _____ she was tired, so I _____ her to go home and rest.
a) told … said b) said … said c) told … told d) said … told

22. Could I _____ you a favour? I need some help with my suitcase.
a) tell b) say c) ask d) make

23. The teacher _____ the students whether they had finished the task.
a) told b) asked c) said d) spoke

24. How many languages can your cousin _____ fluently?
a) talk b) say c) speak d) tell

25. He _____ me a long story, but he never _____ a word about his wife.
a) told … said b) said … told c) told … told d) said … said

26. Which sentence is correct?
a) She said me that she was busy.
b) She told me that she was busy.
c) She told that she was busy.
d) She told to me that she was busy.

27. Which sentence is correct?
a) The coach said us to warm up first.
b) The coach told to us to warm up first.
c) The coach told us warm up first.
d) The coach told us to warm up first.

28. Which sentence is correct?
a) Please say hello to your parents from me.
b) Please tell hello to your parents from me.
c) Please say your parents hello from me.
d) Please speak hello to your parents from me.

29. Which sentence is correct?
a) Can I speak you for a moment?
b) Can I say with you for a moment?
c) Can I talk to you for a moment?
d) Can I tell with you for a moment?

30. Which sentence is correct?
a) He has never said a lie to me.
b) He has never told me a lie.
c) He has never told a lie me.
d) He has never telled me a lie.

Answer Key

Say vs Tell · Explanations are shortened — the full interactive version is at gramvoy.com/exercises/say-vs-tell/

1. d) tell

The listener, me, comes straight after the verb, so tell: tell me the way.

2. a) said

There is no listener here, only the words (that the train was running late), so said.

3. b) told

Tell + person + thing: he told me a secret.

4. c) say

Say something to someone, and after did comes the base form: What did he say to you?

5. d) told

The person, you, follows the verb, so tell, and after has comes the participle: told.

6. a) said

Greetings and short words go with say: said goodbye, say hello, say thank you.

7. d) tell

Anyone is the listener and comes right after the verb, so tell anyone about it.

8. b) told

An instruction is tell + person + to do, and yesterday needs the past simple: told me to rest.

9. c) says

Sorry is a short word you say, so says sorry — like say thank you or say hello.

10. b) told

You is the listener right after the verb, so tell, and after I've comes the participle: told.

11. c) tell

The fixed phrase is tell the truth, with no person needed — like tell a lie.

12. b) tell

Stories, jokes and lies are things you tell, even without a listener: tell stories.

13. d) tell

Tell the time means read a clock and know what time it is — here tell means "know" or "work out", with no person after it.

14. b) tell

Tell the difference means see or know which is which, so tell, with no person after it.

15. a) told

Jokes are things you tell, and its past form is irregular: tell – told – told.

16. c) say

Say thank you is a fixed phrase, and the listener follows with to — say thank you to your aunt.

17. d) told

An instruction is tell + person + to do: the guide told us to stay close.

18. a) told

Tell + person + not to do gives a negative instruction or advice: my manager told me not to worry.

19. d) said

Yes and no are words you say: she said yes.

20. a) said

Say + to + person + that-clause is correct: she said to me that … Tell takes the person without to (told me that), and talked and spoke to me can't…

21. d) said … told

No listener in the first part, just the words: said she was tired.

22. c) ask

Asking for help is a request, so ask you a favour — like ask a question.

23. b) asked

The teacher wants to find out, and whether introduces that question, so asked.

24. c) speak

With a language the verb is speak: speak French, speak three languages.

25. a) told … said

Tell + person + a story: told me a long story.

26. b) She told me that she was busy.

Tell takes the listener directly: She told me that she was busy.

27. d) The coach told us to warm up first.

Instructions follow the pattern tell + person + to + base form: told us to warm up.

28. a) Please say hello to your parents from me.

Greetings take say, and the listener follows with to: say hello to your parents.

29. c) Can I talk to you for a moment?

To have a conversation with someone, use talk to or speak to: Can I talk to you for a moment?

30. b) He has never told me a lie.

Lies are things you tell, and the person goes before the thing: He has never told me a lie.