

# *Tell or Say*

## Teachers' version

### 1. Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with *tell* or *say*.

Keep in mind: Sometimes you have to use the past form.

She **said** that she went to the cinema yesterday.

He **told** the teacher that he was at school yesterday.

I have to **tell** you something!

What did she **say**?

What did Max **tell** the teacher?

The girl on the bus **said**, "Good morning, Julie!"

Laura **told** me that she played Tennis last week.

### 2. Say to me & tell to me

You're not sure which combination to use? Let's find out!

To do so, follow the instructions below:

1. Open the website [www.english-corpora.org/bnc/](http://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/).
2. There is a blue box on the left-hand side of the page. Select the word **List** by clicking it.
3. Type **SAY TO ME** in the white box.
4. Click **Find matching strings** beneath the white box in which you typed the words.
5. The search results are presented in a table. There is a column labeled **FREQ** (frequency). This number tells you how often say to me was found in the corpus. Write the total of all numbers into the table below.
6. Repeat the steps 1-6 with the word **TELL TO ME**.

	Frequency
<b>Say to me</b>	1141
<b>Tell to me</b>	12

**What do the results tell you about the two combinations? Are both of them used?**

*Tell to me* is not used as often as *say to me* → *say to me* is very rarely used

---

---

### 3. When to use *to*

Now: When can you use *to* with *tell* or *say*? Use the following instructions to find out yourself:

1. Open the website [www.english-corpora.org/bnc/](http://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/) again. If that website is still open, you can click on **SEARCH** in the top left corner.
2. This time select the word **Collocates** in the blue box on the left-hand side. This tells you which words appear together.
3. Type *tell* in the white box labelled “word/phrase” and type **to** in the white box labelled “collocates”.
4. There is a scale with numbers beneath. Click on the **3 to the right** of the middle. It should look like this:



This means we can look at sentences where *to* appears together with *tell*, at the most three words after *tell*.

5. Good job, you have set up the search! Click **Find collocates** beneath the scale.
6. Now, you can see the results in a table. Click on the word **TO**.
7. Here is a list of all the sentences that match your search. These sentences are called concordance lines.

Write down the three words after *tell* for sentences 1 to 6. Colour *tell* and *to* in a colour of your choice.

- 1) tell them to stop... 2) tell them to get... 3) tell them to move...  
4) tell them to do ... 5) tell you to sell ... 6) tell her to stay ...

What type of word comes right after *tell*?

Personal pronoun

---

What type of word comes right after *to*?

Verb (infinitive)

---

Repeat steps 1-6 with *say*.

Write down the three words after *say* for sentences 1 to 6. Colour *say* and *to* in a colour of your choice.

- 1) say to you know... 2) say to show and... 3) say to us. And...  
4) say to Alan Yeah ... 5) say to the County Council... 6) say to them well ...

Do you notice the difference? Fill in gaps and compare with a partner.

## Rules

*Tell* and *say* are used in different ways. Here is what you can say:

→ *Tell* someone something or *tell* someone to do something

→ *Say* (something) to someone

Note: The word *to* is not used directly after *tell*.

### 4. Correct or incorrect?

Are the following sentences correct or incorrect?

If they are incorrect, underline the problematic word and correct it.

Note: You have to use the simple past.

1) “Good morning,” she told to me.

“Good morning,” she said to me.

---

2) Lisa asked me if I liked chocolate and I told yes.

Lisa asked me if I liked chocolate and I said yes.

---

3) Ben told me about his new basketball.

correct

---

4) He said, “I really like the sunny weather.”

correct

---

5) Dad told to me to do my homework.

Dad told me to do my homework.

---

6) My teacher said me that I was a good student.

My teacher told me (that) I was a good student.

---

### 5. Think – Pair – Share

**Think:** Think about two things you did last weekend. You may take some notes if that helps you.

**Pair:** Tell your partner about the activities you did last weekend.

**Share:** Your partner has to report what you did last weekend with the help of *tell* and *say*. If you need more help with building such sentences, you may come to see me.

Individual answers

## **Additional Task**

**Get creative: Write a short story (five to ten sentences) including *tell* and *say*.**

Individual answers