

Tell or Say

Student worksheet

1. Fill in the gaps

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

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

She _____ that she went to the cinema yesterday.

He _____ the teacher that he was at school yesterday.

I have to _____ you something!

What did she _____?

What did Max _____ the teacher?

The girl on the bus _____, "Good morning, Julie!"

Laura _____ 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/.
2. There is a blue box on the left-hand side of the page. Select the word **List** by clicking on it.
3. Type **SAY TO ME** in the white box.
4. Click on **Find matching strings** below the white box in which you typed the words.
5. The search results are presented in a table. There is a column⁴ 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 phrase **TELL TO ME**.

Not sure how to do it?

Ask a friend or me. 😊

	Frequency
Say to me	
Tell to me	

What do the results tell you about the two combinations? Are both of them used by British speakers of English?

3. When to use *to*

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/ again. If that website is still open, you can click on **SEARCH** in the top left corner.
2. This time select the **Collocates** option 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”.
There is a scale with numbers beneath. Click on the **3 to the right** of the middle. It should look like this:



4. 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.

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

- 1) tell _____ ... 2) tell _____ ... 3) tell _____ ...
4) tell _____ ... 5) tell _____ ... 6) tell _____ ...

What type of word comes right after *tell*?

Do you need help?

Come and see me. 😊

What type of word comes right after *to*?

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 _____ ... 2) say _____ ... 3) say _____ ...
...
4) say _____ ... 5) say _____ ... 6) say _____ ...
...

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

Do you have different answers?

Come and see me. 😊

Rules

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

→ _____ *someone something* or _____ *someone to do something*

→ _____ *(something) to someone*

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

Congratulations, you are an expert now!

4. Correct or incorrect?

Are the following sentences correct or incorrect?

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

Note: You have to use the simple past.

You are not sure?

Look at the rule box.

- 1) "Good morning," she told to me.

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

- 3) Ben told me about his new basketball.

- 4) He said, "I really like the sunny weather."

- 5) Dad told to me to do my homework.

- 6) My teacher said 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 and write down what your partner did.

Share: With the whole class: Tell us what your partner did last weekend. Use the words *tell* and *say*.

**You are not sure how to
build those sentences?**
I can help. 😊

Additional Task

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