

Say or tell? ★★

The main difference is about grammar. There can also be a difference in meaning.

**1 Grammar: he said
he told me**



**She said: "I love you."
She said she loved him.
She told him she loved him.**

Cartoons: Holden-Hotopf

When you use **tell**, you state who you are telling: *tell me, tell the boys, tell the court, tell the judge...*

When you use **say**, you don't (well, we can say *she said to him...*, but often we don't)

2 Meaning

2.1 Tell = narrate



He told wonderful stories to the children

More examples:

Tell the truth, tell a lie, tell lies

2.2 Tell = give an order (followed by to +infinitive)



She told Michael to get up.

More examples:

He told the police officer to stop the traffic

James told them not to expect a reply.

Quick check

Complete each sentence with the right form of say or tell:

- 1 He _____ the teacher the dog had eaten his homework.
- 2 She always _____ she'll be here before dark, and she never is.
- 3 I thought he was _____ the truth, but he wasn't.
- 4 You may not agree, but I _____ we should wait for a few more minutes.
- 5 The manager _____ the staff not to use the main entrance that day.

