Say or Tell?

Although Say and Tell both mean to communicate orally with someone, they are used in a different way.

We say something. (No personal object)

We "Tell" someone something. (Personal object)

I didn't say anything!

I'm going to tell you a secret

"Use Say"

We can use say with direct questions.

Amy said: "Do you want to come to my house?

If we want to put a personal object after "say", we have to use the word "to".

Bob said to me that he wanted to go to the party!

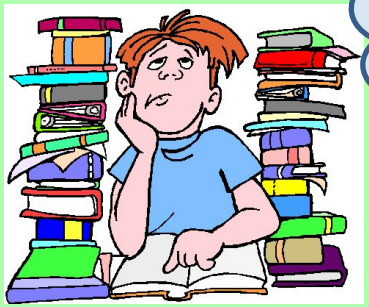
Expressions where "say" is used:

- Say hello
- Say goodbye
- Say thanks
- Say yes
- Say no
- Say a prayer

"Use of Tell"

To give orders or advice.

Tell + object + infinitive



The teacher told me to study for my test.

My mom told me I shouldn't eat junk food.

To give or ask for information.

Could you tell me how to go downtown?

Expressions where "tell" is used:

- tell (someone) a story
- tell (someone) a lie
- tell (someone) the truth
- tell the future
- tell the time
- tell a joke