

USED TO & WOULD

Talking About Past Habits, States and Memories

Level: B2

Skills: Reading · Listening · Grammar · Writing · Speaking

Learning goal

By the end of this worksheet, you should be able to use **used to** and **would** naturally when talking about past habits, states and repeated actions.

1. WARM-UP — THEN & NOW

Think about your life **ten years ago**.

Make short notes. Don't worry about grammar yet.

Where I lived:

Things I did regularly:

Something I liked, disliked or believed:

Something that is completely different now:

Now look at your answers.

Which describe a **repeated action**?

Which describe a **state or situation**?

Keep your answers — you'll come back to them later.

2. NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE

Read these sentences:

A. I played outside every evening when I was a child.

B. I used to play outside every evening when I was a child.

C. When I was a child, I would play outside every evening until dinner.

All three describe the past, but they don't present it in exactly the same way.

Match each sentence to the best explanation.

1. ___ Simply tells us about something that happened regularly in the past.
2. ___ Emphasises a past habit that is no longer true and creates a contrast with the present.
3. ___ Describes a repeated action within an established past context and is particularly natural in stories and memories.

Quick Grammar Guide

USED TO + base verb

Use **used to** for:

Past habits

I used to walk to school every morning.

Past states or situations that are no longer true

I used to be very shy.

We used to live near the sea.

I used to love horror films.

WOULD + base verb

Use **would** for repeated past actions, particularly when the past context has already been established.

When I was a child, we would visit my grandparents every Sunday.

During the summer holidays, my friends and I would stay outside until dark.

Remember

USED TO → HABITS + STATES

WOULD → REPEATED ACTIONS

We don't normally use **would** for past states:

✓ *I used to be shy.*

✗ *I would be shy.*

✓ *I used to have long hair.*

✗ *I would have long hair.*

When you're unsure, used to is usually the safer choice.

3. GRAMMAR — USED TO OR WOULD?

Decide whether each sentence can use:

A. USED TO only

B. BOTH USED TO and WOULD

1. When we were children, we _____ spend hours building things in the garden.
2. I _____ believe that adults knew the answer to everything.
3. Every Friday after school, my friends and I _____ buy something to eat and sit in the park.
4. My grandparents _____ own a little house near the coast.
5. During the summer, my dad _____ take us swimming early in the morning.
6. I _____ hate getting up early when I was a teenager.

Think deeper

Why can't **would** be used in some of these sentences?

4. READING — SUMMERS I STILL REMEMBER

Before you read

Think about your childhood holidays.

Where did you usually spend them? Who were you with? What did you regularly do?

Now read the story.

Don't focus on the grammar yet. Read for meaning first.

Summers I Still Remember

When I was a child, my family **used to spend** most of the summer at my grandparents' house in a small seaside town. They **used to live** in an old white house about ten minutes from the beach. It wasn't particularly big or modern, but to me it was the most exciting place in the world. We **used to have** a small room upstairs, and my brother and I slept there together with the windows open because there was no air conditioning.

Life there was completely different from our life in the city. At home, my parents **used to be** quite busy, and we didn't have much time to do things together. At my grandparents' house, everything seemed slower. We didn't have a strict routine, but somehow our days always followed a similar pattern.

My grandmother **would get up** before everyone else and prepare breakfast. The smell of fresh coffee and warm bread **would fill** the house, and eventually it would wake us up. After breakfast, my brother and I **would grab** our towels and run down to the beach. We **would spend** hours swimming, looking for shells and inventing competitions that only made sense to us.

My grandfather **used to be** a fisherman, although he had already retired by the time I was born. He **used to know** almost everyone in the town, so going for a walk with him could take forever. Every few metres, someone **would stop** him for a conversation. As a child, I found this incredibly boring. Now, strangely, it's one of the things I remember most fondly.

In the late afternoon, when it became cooler, my grandfather **would take** us to the harbour. He **would tell** us stories about the years when he worked at sea — some frightening, some funny and probably some completely invented. My brother **would listen** with complete fascination, while I **used to think** my grandfather was exaggerating most of the time.

Evenings were my favourite part of the day. We **would all sit** outside for dinner, and nobody seemed to be in a hurry to leave the table. Afterwards, the adults **would talk** for hours while we children played nearby. I **used to love** those evenings because there was nowhere else we needed to be and nothing we needed to do.

Things are very different now. My grandparents' old house belongs to another family, and I rarely visit that town. My brother and I have busy lives of our own, and organising even one weekend together can be difficult.

But sometimes, when I smell coffee early in the morning or hear waves breaking on a beach, I suddenly remember those summers. At the time, they seemed completely ordinary.

Now I realise they weren't.

A. Check Your Understanding

Answer the questions in your own words.

1. How was life at the grandparents' house different from the writer's normal life in the city?

2. What did the writer and their brother usually do after breakfast?

3. Why did walks with the grandfather often take a long time?

4. How did the writer and their brother react differently to their grandfather's stories?

5. How does the writer feel about those childhood summers now?

B. Notice USED TO and WOULD

Go back to the story and find:

Two examples of USED TO describing a past state or situation:

1.

2.

Two examples of USED TO describing a past habit:

1.

2.

Three examples of WOULD describing repeated past actions:

1.

2.

3.

Now complete the rule:

USED TO → past _____ + past _____

WOULD → repeated past _____

C. Make It Personal

Think about a place you regularly visited when you were younger.

Where was it?

Who were you with?

What did you regularly do there?

What was different about your life then?

Now speak for **1–2 minutes** about that memory.

Try to use **used to** for past habits and states and **would** for repeated actions.

5. LISTENING — MEMORIES FROM THE PAST

Listen to the speaker telling stories about her **childhood, hobbies and previous jobs**. Pay attention not only to what she says, but also to how she uses **used to** and **would**.

[USED TO vs WOULD — B2 English Listening | Peach Teach English](#)

A. First Listening — Listen for Meaning

What do you learn about:

Her childhood:

Her hobbies:

Her previous jobs:

B. Second Listening — Notice the Language

Listen again and write down:

Two examples with USED TO

1.

2.

Two examples with WOULD

1.

2.

For each example, decide whether it describes a **past state, past habit or repeated past action**.

C. Connect It to Your Life

Choose one of the speaker's memories that reminds you of something from your own past.

Speak for **30–60 seconds** about your experience using **used to** and/or **would**.

6. CORRECT THE MISTAKE

Each sentence contains a problem. Correct it.

1. When I was a child, I would be extremely shy.

2. I used to went swimming every Saturday.

3. My family would live in a very small apartment when I was young.

4. I didn't used to enjoy reading.

5. When we lived near the beach, we would going swimming every morning.

7. WRITING — A SNAPSHOT OF MY PAST

Think of one period of your life:

- your childhood
- your school years
- university
- your first job
- a place where you previously lived
- a period when your lifestyle was very different

Write **120–150 words** describing that period.

Try to include:

- at least **3 examples of used to**
- at least **2 examples of would**
- at least **1 past state**
- at least **2 repeated past actions**
- at least **1 contrast between then and now**

Start here

When I think back to _____, my life was very different from the way it is now...

Check your writing

Underline every example of **used to** and circle every example of **would**.

Ask yourself:

Did I use would only for repeated actions?

Did I establish a clear past context before using would?

Did I use used to for states?

8. SPEAKING — THEN VS NOW

Now close your notes.

Speak for **1–2 minutes** about how your life has changed.

Choose **ONE** topic:

- A.** My childhood
- B.** My school years
- C.** My social life

- D. My relationship with technology
- E. My weekends
- F. The way I learned English

Try to use:

USED TO → past habits and states

WOULD → repeated past actions

Example opening

When I was at school, I used to be quite shy. I didn't use to speak very much in class. After school, though, I would meet my closest friends and we'd spend hours talking...

Record yourself on your phone.

Then listen to your recording.

Did you use used to?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did you use would?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did you use them accurately?

☐ Yes ☐ Not always

Did you have to stop and think before using them?

☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Hardly ever

9. PRODUCTIVE USE CHALLENGE

Now try again — but this time, **don't consciously plan where you will use used to or would.**

Answer this question for **60–90 seconds**:

How is your life different now from when you were a teenager?

Speak naturally.

Afterwards, listen to your recording.

Did **used to** or **would** appear naturally in your answer?

☐ **Yes, without much thought.**

☐ **Yes, but I had to stop and think.**

☐ **No. I went back to simpler structures.**

If you had to stop and think — or didn't use the structures at all — you understand the grammar, but it isn't **automatic yet**.

Come back to this speaking activity tomorrow and try again.

FINAL CHALLENGE

Complete this sentence **without thinking for more than five seconds**:

I used to _____, but now _____.

Now continue:

Back then, I would _____.

If you can do that naturally, you're no longer just recognising the grammar.

You're starting to use it.