

used to (do)

A Study this example situation:

a few years ago



these days

Nicola doesn't travel much these days.
She prefers to stay at home.

But she **used to travel** a lot.
She **used to go** away two or three times a year.

She **used to travel** a lot = she travelled often in the past, but she doesn't do this any more.

B I **used to** do something = I did it often in the past, but not any more:

- ☐ I **used to play** tennis a lot, but I don't play very much now.
- ☐ David **used to spend** a lot of money on clothes. These days he can't afford it.
- ☐ 'Do you go to the cinema much?' 'Not now, but I **used to**.' (= I used to go)

We also use **used to** ... for things that were true, but are not true any more:

- ☐ This building is now a furniture shop. It **used to be** a cinema.
- ☐ I **used to think** Mark was unfriendly, but now I realise he's a very nice person.
- ☐ I've started drinking coffee recently. I never **used to like** it before.
- ☐ Lisa **used to have** very long hair when she was a child.

C 'I **used to** do something' is past. There is no present. You cannot say 'I use to do'. To talk about the present, we use the present simple (I **do**).

Compare:

past	he used to play	we used to live	there used to be
present	he plays	we live	there is

- ☐ We **used to live** in a small village, but now we **live** in a city.
- ☐ There **used to be** four cinemas in the town. Now there **is** only one.

D The normal question form is **did** (you) **use to** ... ? :

- ☐ **Did** you **use to eat** a lot of sweets when you were a child? (= did you do this often?)

The negative form is **didn't use to** ... (**used not to** ... is also possible):

- ☐ I **didn't use to like** him. (or I **used not to like** him.)

E Compare I **used to do** and I **was doing**:

- ☐ I **used to watch** TV a lot. (= I watched TV often in the past, but I don't do this any more)
- ☐ I **was watching** TV when Rob called. (= I was in the middle of watching TV)

F Do not confuse I **used to do** and I **am used to doing** (see Unit 61). The structures and meanings are different:

- ☐ I **used to live** alone. (= I lived alone in the past, but I no longer live alone.)
- ☐ I **am used to living** alone. (= I live alone, and it's not a problem for me because I've lived alone for some time.)

18.1 Complete the sentences with **used to** + a suitable verb.

- Nicola used to travel a lot, but she doesn't go away much these days.
- Sophie _____ a motorbike, but last year she sold it and bought a car.
- Our friends moved to Spain a few years ago. They _____ in Paris.
- Jackie _____ my best friend, but we aren't friends any more.
- I rarely eat ice cream now, but I _____ it when I was a child.
- It only takes me about 40 minutes to get to work now that the new road is open.
It _____ more than an hour.
- There _____ a hotel near the airport, but it closed a long time ago.
- I _____ in a factory. It wasn't my favourite job.

18.2 Complete the sentences. Choose from the box.

- Lisa used to have very long hair when she was a child.
- We _____ to watch TV a lot, but we don't have a TV any more.
- Lisa works in a shop now. She _____ a receptionist in a hotel.
- What games _____ you use to play when you were a child?
- I _____ like big cities, but now I prefer the countryside.
- In your last job, how many hours a day did you _____ to work?
- I don't travel very much these days, but I used _____.
- I used to _____ to run ten kilometres, but I can't run that far now.
- These days I eat more than before. I _____ use to eat as much.

did
didn't
to
use
used
used to
used to be
used to have
be able

18.3 Compare what Karen said ten years ago and what she says today:

TEN YEARS AGO

I travel a lot.

I'm very lazy.

I don't like cheese.

I play the piano.

I never drink tea.

I have a dog.

TODAY

I eat lots of cheese now.

My dog died two years ago.

I work very hard these days.

I haven't played the piano for a long time.

I don't go away much these days.

Tea's great! I like it now.

Now write about how Karen has changed. Use **used to** / **didn't use to** / **never used to** in the first part of your sentence.

- She used to travel a lot, but she doesn't go away much these days.
- She used _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____

18.4 Write sentences about yourself. Begin **I used to ...** (**I used to be/work/like/play** etc.)

- I used to live in a small village, but now I live in a city.
- I used to play tennis a lot, but I don't play any more.
- I used _____, but _____
- I _____
- _____

Now begin with **I didn't use to ...**

- I didn't use to read a lot, but I do now.
- I didn't _____
- _____