

Mastering "Used to" and "Would"

Level: B2

Topic: Describing past habits and states

1. Explanation

"Used to"

- **Positive sentences:**

We use **"used to"** to describe habits, repeated actions, or states in the past that are no longer true.

Examples:

- I used to walk to school every day. (*This was a past habit, but I don't do it anymore.*)
- They used to own a small bakery in town. (*This was a past state.*)

- **Negative sentences:**

We form negatives by adding **"didn't"** before "use to" (note the lack of "d").

Examples:

- I didn't use to like coffee, but now I love it.
- She didn't use to play sports as a child.

- **Questions:**

We form questions by using **"Did"** at the beginning of the sentence.

Examples:

- Did you use to live in this neighborhood?
 - Did they use to travel abroad every summer?
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"Would"

- **Positive sentences:**

We use **"would"** to describe habitual actions in the past (but not states!). It often emphasizes repetition or nostalgia.

Examples:

- Every evening, my dad would read us a bedtime story. (*A repeated action in the past.*)
- We would always spend summers by the lake.

💡 **Important:** "Would" cannot be used to describe states in the past (e.g., *I would be shy as a child* – INCORRECT). Use "used to" for states instead.

- **Negative sentences and questions:**

"Would" is not typically used in negative or interrogative forms when describing past habits in this context. For these, we use "used to".

2. Grammar Exercises

Exercise 1: Fill in the blanks with "used to" or "would"

1. When we were kids, we ____ (play) outside until it got dark.
 2. My grandmother ____ (bake) the most delicious cookies every Sunday.
 3. I ____ (not/eat) vegetables when I was younger, but now I do.
 4. ____ you ____ (have) a pet when you were a child?
 5. He ____ (visit) his grandparents every summer during the holidays.
 6. We ____ (not/go) to the beach often, as it was too far from our home.
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Exercise 2: Rewrite the sentences using "used to" or "would"

1. When I was a child, I always walked to school.
 2. My dad told us stories before bed every evening.
 3. She was very shy as a teenager, but now she's confident.
 4. They owned a small restaurant, but they sold it years ago.
 5. Every winter, we spent a week skiing in the mountains.
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Exercise 3: Error correction

Find and correct the mistakes in the following sentences:

1. I would be afraid of the dark when I was little.
 2. Did you used to play piano when you were younger?
 3. She didn't used to like running, but now she's a marathon runner.
 4. We would go camping in the summer, but we didn't use to enjoy it much.
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3. Exam Practice (FCE-Style Tasks)

Part 1: Open Cloze (Grammar Focus)

Fill in the blanks with one word.

1. I ____ to live in London before moving to Manchester.
 2. Every summer, we ____ spend hours swimming in the lake.
 3. My sister ____ not use to enjoy spicy food, but now she loves it.
 4. ____ you use to have a favorite teacher in school?
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Part 2: Sentence Transformations

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first. Use **2-5 words**.

1. I played football every weekend when I was younger.
→ I ____ ____ ____ football every weekend when I was younger.
 2. She didn't like reading as a child, but now she reads a lot.
→ She ____ ____ ____ reading as a child.
 3. We always spent Christmas at my grandparents' house.
→ We ____ ____ Christmas at my grandparents' house.
 4. Did you often visit museums when you were a child?
→ ____ you ____ ____ museums when you were a child?
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4. Speaking Practice

Discuss the following questions in pairs or groups:

1. What hobbies or activities did you use to do when you were younger but don't do anymore?
 2. Think of a family tradition you used to have. Describe it.
 3. How has your daily routine changed over the years?
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5. Writing Task

Write a short essay (150-200 words) about your childhood habits and routines.

Use "used to" and "would" at least 5 times.

6. Answer Key

Exercise 1:

1. would play
2. would bake
3. didn't use to eat
4. Did you use to have
5. would visit
6. didn't use to go

Exercise 2:

1. I used to walk to school when I was a child.
2. My dad would tell us stories every evening.
3. She used to be very shy as a teenager.
4. They used to own a small restaurant.
5. Every winter, we would spend a week skiing.

Exercise 3:

1. I used to be afraid of the dark when I was little.
2. Did you use to play piano when you were younger?
3. She didn't use to like running, but now she's a marathon runner.
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