
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Grammar

'Used to' and 'would'



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Finn

Hello again. Welcome to 6 Minute Grammar with me, Finn.

Catherine

And me, Catherine. Hello.

Finn

In this programme we're talking about the past with **used to** and **would**.

Catherine

That's right, so let's get started. Finn, tell us, please, about something interesting that **you used to do** when you were a child.

Finn

Right, OK, well... **I used to sleepwalk**.

Catherine

Sleepwalk? Every night Finn?

Finn

Yes, **I used to wake up** every night at around midnight. And **I would get out of** bed. Sometimes **I would even get dressed!** And then I would sleepwalk.

Catherine

Your poor mum and dad! So Finn said **he used to wake up** and **he would get out of** bed. We use **used to** and **would** to talk about things that happened regularly in the past, usually when we're comparing the past with the present. Here's Neil with those examples again:

Neil

I **used to** sleepwalk.

I **used to** wake up every night at midnight.

I **would** get out of bed.

Sometimes I **would** even get dressed.

Finn

Very good, thank you Neil. Usually either **used to** or **would** is possible. So I can say I **used to** get out of bed or I **would** get out of bed. Let's hear some more examples:

Neil

I **used to** get the bus to work but now I walk. It's quicker.

The bus **used to** take half an hour.

My girlfriend **would** meet me at the bus stop. Then we **would** go for a quick drink.

Catherine

OK. Now, we follow **used to** and **would** with an infinitive without to for all persons, so it's: **I used to get, the bus used to take, My girlfriend would meet me, we would go...**

Finn

And we often use the contracted, or short, form of **would**, so instead of **We would go** for a drink, I can say **we'd go** for a drink, **I'd** get dressed, and so on.

Catherine

But there's no contraction for **used to**.

Finn

So that's **used to** and **would** for repeated actions or habits in the past. Now we can also use **used to** to talk about a continued state, or situation in the past. Neil.

Neil

Zina used to live in Taiwan, but now she's living in the UK.

I used to love cooking, but I don't have much time now.

There used to be a restaurant here but they knocked it down.

Catherine

Now we don't use **would** in this way, so you can't say: **There would be** a restaurant here but they knocked it down. **Would** is for things that happened regularly. We can't use it to talk about past states or situations.

IDENT

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Finn

And we're looking at **used to** and **would** to talk about what happened regularly in the past.

Catherine

...and also to talk about some of Finn's strange night-time habits...

Finn

Come on... I was a kid! I don't do any of this anymore.

Catherine

Are you sure?

Finn

Nothing like this. Only worse things. What about you Catherine? **Did you use to do** anything strange when you were younger?

Catherine

Well, not as strange as sleepwalking, **I didn't use to sleepwalk**. But at night **I would sleep** on the floor from time to time.

Finn

Really?! **Didn't you use to sleep** in your bed?

Catherine

No, **I would get into** bed, but **I wouldn't stay** there.

Finn

Interesting! Right, OK, for questions and negatives with used to - we use **did** or **didn't** plus **subject** plus **use to** plus **infinitive**...

Catherine

...so Finn asked me: "**Did you use to do** anything strange?" And he asked me: "**Didn't you use to sleep** in your bed?"

Finn

...and Catherine replied: "I didn't use to sleepwalk..." That's **subject** plus **didn't** plus **use to** plus **infinitive**.

Catherine

...and that's **use to** written without a **-d**. In positive sentences **used to** has a **-d** at the end. But in negative sentences and questions, we write **use** without a **-d**.

Finn

...Now, the negative of **would** is **wouldn't**, so Catherine said **I wouldn't stay** there. We use **wouldn't** in questions, too. So Catherine, wouldn't you go back to bed?

Catherine

No, my parents used to put me back to bed.

Finn

OK, time for a quiz. Number one. Listen to this sentence. Is **used to** spelt with, or without, a **-d**? When I lived in Jordan, I used to go to the beach every day.

Catherine

And that's **used to** with a **-d**.

Finn

Good, now number two. Is this sentence right or wrong? Suleyman **would** have blond hair when he was a baby.

Catherine

And that's wrong. The correct sentence is Suleyman **used to** have blond hair when he was a baby.

Finn

Correct. Number three. Is this right or wrong? Do you used to live in Beijing?

Catherine

That's wrong. **Use to** questions need **did**, not **do**. And that's the end of the quiz. Well done if you got them all right.

Finn

There's more about this on our website at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again soon for 6 Minute Grammar.

Both

Bye.