

Talking about past states and habits

used to

would

past simple

'Used to' can be used to talk about past states as well as past habits (repeated actions).

Used to + infinitive

- We used to live in New York when I was a kid.
- There didn't use to be a supermarket there.
When did it open?
- I used to go swimming every Thursday when I was at school.
- She used to smoke but she gave up a few years ago.

'Would' is only used to talk about past habits.

'Would' is not used with stative verbs (verbs that describe a state of being), such as be, understand, feel or love.

Using would for past habits is slightly more formal than used to.

- Every Saturday I would go on a long bike ride.
- My dad would read me amazing stories every night at bedtime.

We can also use the past simple to talk about past states or habits. The main difference is that the past simple doesn't emphasise the repeated or continuous nature of the action or situation. Also, the past simple doesn't make it so clear that the thing is no longer true.

- We went to the same beach every summer.
- I played tennis a lot when I was younger.
- When I was at school I did two hours of homework every day.

used to: Negative: **didn't use to**

Sometimes we use "**didn't used to**". Both forms are common, but many people consider the form with the final -d to be incorrect, and you should not use it in exams.

Common mistakes :

- ✗ When I was a kid I would love playing football.
(love is a stative verb)
- ✓ When I was a kid I used to love playing football.