Expressing willingness and unwillingness

*Will and won’t* are used most often in English to talk about the future. However, they also have other functions, one of which is to express *willingness and unwillingness*. Likewise, *would and wouldn’t* are not only used for conditional sentences, but can also be used to express willingness when speaking about the past.

### Expressing willingness, unwillingness:

**will, won't, would, wouldn't**

**In the present: will, won’t**

We can use *will* to say that someone is *willing* to do something:

Mike is a nice person; **he will always help** you if you need him.

We can use *will not / won't* to express an *unwillingness* to do something:

There is no point in talking to him – **he won’t listen**.

My car **won’t start** – I’ll have to take the bus.

**In the past: would, wouldn’t**

When speaking about **the past**, we can use *would* to express that someone was generally willing to do things:

Mike was a really nice person; **he’d (he would) always help** anyone in any situation.

We **don’t use would** to speak about single occasions in the past:

She agreed to help me.

He **would help me**.

However, we can use *would not / wouldn’t* to express an unwillingness to do something (both generally and on single occasions):

My dad always helped with the cooking, but **he wouldn’t wash** the dishes. (generally)

I was late for work today because my car **wouldn’t start**. (single occasion)