

PART ONE: Used to' for past habits

1. We use 'used to' to talk about past events which we no longer do. We only use it to talk about the past; there is no similar expression for the present.

'I studied French, but I don't anymore.' → 'I used to study French.'
 'In the past I smoked, but I don't now.' → 'I used to smoke.'

Note: after 'used' to we always use the **infinitive**. Never use a continuous or past tense verb:
 'I used to smoke.'
 'I used to smoking.'
 'I used to smoked.'

2. Asking questions using 'use to'
 We usually use 'did' when we ask about past habits. The typical question form is:
 'Did you use to watch Mickey Mouse?'
 'Did you use to like school?'

Note: 'Use to' is used in the question form not 'used to'.

3. Using 'would' instead of 'used to'
 We use 'would' when we want to talk about how often a past habit happened. It can have the same meaning as 'used to'. For example:
 'I used to go swimming twice a week.' → 'I would go swimming twice a week.'
 Note: Both of these sentences have the same meaning.

4. We can use 'would' instead of 'used to' when a time is mentioned:
 'When I was young, I used to visit my grandmother every summer.' → 'When I was young, I would visit my grandmother every summer.'
 Note: Both of these sentences have the same meaning.

5. If the sentence is NOT about a repeating habit/action, or does NOT include a time expression, we can not use 'would':
 'I used to play piano.' → 'I would play piano.'
 It is more natural to say:
 'I used to play piano. I would practice every day.'

6. Fill in the blanks with a "used to" phrase or a "would" phrase that completes the sentence.
 I live in Austin now, but I used to _____.
 I don't play a musical instrument now, but _____.
 I get up early now, but _____.
 Before my parents had kids, they _____.
 When I was young, I _____.

PART TWO: Idioms and Expressions

Teachers: break the group into pairs and assign each pair a conversation.
 Students: Read the assigned conversations with your partner and decide what the underlined expressions mean. When it is your turn, read the conversation to the group and explain its meaning.
 Then ask the group a discussion question based on the topic of your conversation.

Conversation 1:
 A: I'm going to drive your new car to work today.

B: Over my dead body!

Conversation 2:

A: In Europe it is popular for men to wear short pants that come just below the knee.

B: Yes, but that style never caught on in the United States. Back in the fifties, women wore pants just below the knee. They were called peddle pushers. They are back in style now. But they are called crop pants. I think American men view short pants as something that women wear, not men.

Conversation 3:

A: I saw Jim in the hall the other day. I spoke to him, but he didn't even look at me.

B: Yes, he gave me the brush off too. I think now that he is a manager he thinks he shouldn't associate with the "little people".

Conversation 4:

A: Let's stop at Starbucks and have a latte.

B: Now you're talking. I'll have a decaf frappuccino with an espresso shot.

Conversation 5:

A: One day I'm going to have a million dollar salary. I'll buy myself a Ferrari.

B: Dream on! You will probably live from hand to mouth your whole life.

Conversation 6:

A: The thief was sentenced to twenty years. After he was sentenced, they slapped the cuffs on him.

B: He'll spend at least the next ten years behind bars.

Conversation 7:

A: Can you give me an idea of the price of this house.

B: I'm not sure exactly what they're asking for it.

A: How about a ballpark figure?

B: I think in the \$400,000 range.

Conversation 8:

A: I can't stand Eva's son. He's arrogant and bosses her around.

B: You shouldn't badmouth Jeff. He is a little stuck up, but he loves his mother very much.

Conversation 9:

A: Did you see that guy? He just bought an expensive ring and paid for it in cash.

B: I noticed he had a big wad of cash in his hand. He was itching to spend it.

Conversation 10:

A: Finally the semester is over. Let's go down a few beers to celebrate.

B: I'd love to, but I've got to catch the red-eye flight to Boston tomorrow. Better pass.

Conversation 11:

A: His girlfriend is beautiful. She really turns heads when she walks into a room.

B: Dating a girl that beautiful can be a liability. Everyone tries to flirt with her. Every guy in the room is making eyes at her.

Conversation 12:

A: I am thinking about buying a used car. I'm just scared that there might be something wrong with it.

B: You have to be careful. You should go over it with a fine-toothed comb. Otherwise you could get burned.