

BUILDING VOCABULARY – GRAMMAR REFERENCE



(fonte: Freepik)

Greeting / Leaving someone

1. What have you been up to? (= What have you been doing lately?)

Example conversation:

Tom: Hey Luke! Long time no see! What have you been up do?

Luke: Oh you know, this and that...

2. Speak of the devil! (= We've just been talking about you, and here you are!)

Example conversation:

Suzy: Have you heard from Debbie recently?

Kelly: No, I haven't. I thought she was on holiday. (Debbie walks up to Suzy and Kelly) Suzy: Speak of the devil!

3. Take care (= Look after yourself) Example conversation:

Rob: OK, I'm going home. See you next week!

Pat: Take care then.

4. Well I'll be off then.. (= I'm going now)

Example conversation:

Steve: Is there anything else you'd like me to do?

John: No, that's it for today. Thanks. Steve: Well I'll be off then. See you tomorrow.

5. (I'll) love you and leave you. (= I'm going now)

Example conversation:

(Lisa and Jane are chatting, and Jane's phone rings.) Jane: Hello? (She looks at Lisa) Lisa: Well, I'll love you and leave you!

Lisa: Well, I'll love you and leave you! Jane: Bye!

6. Catch you later. (= See you later) Example conversation: Nick: OK, I'm off now. Ted: OK! Catch you later!

7. Gotta dash! (I've got to go)

Example conversation: Rob: Is that the time? Gotta dash! Jo: OK! Catch you later!

8. (I'm / He's, etc) off out for the evening. (= I'm / He's etc going out for the evening)

Son: OK, See you two later! Dad: Where's he going? Mum: He's off out for the evening

Giving / receiving something

Here you go / There you go (= Here it is!)

Example conversation:

Customer: Can I have a can of coke, please?

Shop assistant (passing it to the customer): Here you go!

Customer: Thanks

I'm good thanks. (= No thank you)

Example conversation:

Food stall assistant: Would you like something to drink with that?

Customer: I'm good thanks.

Saying yes / hospitality

Be my guest! (= Of course - you can do something!)

Example conversation:

Passenger 1: Have you finished with your newspaper?

Passenger 2: Be my guest!

Help yourself! (= Take one)

Example conversation

Bill: Can I have one of your biscuits?

Anna: Help yourself!

Make yourself at home! (= Sit down and feel comfortable)

(John and Sue arrive at Debbie's house for dinner. Debbie shows them in.)

Debbie: Go and sit down. Make yourself at home! What can I get you to drink?

John: Thanks, a beer please... Replying to "no" or an apology

Never mind! (= It doesn't matter)

Example conversation:

Ben: I'm sorry, but I can't come out tonight after all. Liam: Never mind! Another time perhaps. 14. No worries! (= It doesn't matter)

Example conversation:

Richard: Can I borrow your car this evening?

Paul: I'm sorry, but I need to use it. Richard: No worries!

Offering help / asking for help

Would you like a hand with that? (= Can I help you?)

Example conversation:

(Shop assistant sees a customer trying to get something down from a shelf)

Shop assistant: Would you like a hand with that?

Customer: Oh yes please!

Are you alright with that? (= Do you need help?)

Example conversation:

(David sees a woman with a heavy suitcase)

David: Are you alright with that?

Woman: I'm fine, thanks!

Have you got a (noun) on you? (= Do you have a / the...?)

Example conversation:

Mike: Have you got the time on you?

Andy: Yes, it's almost 3 o'clock. Saying thank you

Ta! (= Thank you)

Example conversation:

Barbara: I'll leave you that magazine when I've finished with it.

Theresa: Ta!

Cheers! (= Thank you)

Example conversation:

(Neil comes back from the sandwich shop)

Neil: Here's the sandwich you wanted. Will: Cheers mate!

Nice one! (= Thank you. This is particularly used by British men.)

Example situation:

Someone holds the door open for you, and you say "Nice one!" as you walk through the door. Commenting on a situation / giving an opinion

Keep your chin up! (= Don't worry too much)

Example conversation:

Kirsty: I just had the most terrible meeting with Dan. I think he's going to fire me. Julia: Keep your chin up! I'm sure it'll be fine. 22. I don't mind. (= Either option is fine with me)

Example conversation:

Emma: Do you fancy going out tonight or staying in?

Mark: I don't mind. Whatever you decide...

By the looks of it... (= From what I can see / understand)

Example conversation:

Charles: It's going to rain, by the looks of it. Justine: Mmm. Better take an umbrella.

I've had it up to here with... (= I'm completely fed up with...)

Example conversation

(Two children arguing with each other)

Mum: I've had it up to here with you two! Why don't you go out and play?

Mind your own business! (= Don't be nosy - I'm not going to tell you what you want to

know!)

Example conversation:

Sarah: How much do you earn?

George: Mind your own business!

Commenting on what other people say

You must be joking! (= Absolutely not!)

Example conversation:

Sean: Are you going to tell Melissa about your car accident?

Terry: You must be joking!

Speak for yourself! (= It might be true for you, but it isn't for me!)

Example conversation

Dave: Modern art is so stupid...

June: Speak for yourself! There are some great artists nowadays.

Look who's talking! (= You're criticising something that you do yourself!)

Example conversation:

Geoff: I hate it when people jump the queue. Stella: Look who's talking! I saw you do it yesterday at the bus stop!

Well I never! (= When you're surprised at something)

Example conversation:

Irene: I just told Mr Harris he'd have to do the stock-taking himself.

Betty: Well I never! He won't like that!

Asking someone to hurry

Look lively! (= Hurry up!)

Example conversation:

Joe: Is that our train, Dad?

Dad: Yeah - look lively! It's going to leave in a couple of minutes.

Chop chop! (= Hurry up!)

Example conversation:

(Teacher asks her class to get their books out.)

Teacher: Chop chop! We haven't got all day!

Get a move on! (= Hurry up!)

Example conversation:

Sally: What time do we need to leave?

Larry: In a couple of minutes. Come on! Get a move on!

Asking someone to wait

Just a sec / Hold on a sec. (= Wait a minute)

Example conversation

(In an office)

Nicola: Have you got the phone number for Sue?

Kate: Just a sec. I'll get it for you. 34. Let me get back to you. (= I'll need to find out the information then tell you later)

Example conversation:

Telephone caller: Can you confirm the list price for these items?

Office worker: Let me get back to you on that. 35. I'll be with you in a tick. (= I'll be able to serve you soon)

Example conversation:

(In a shop: the sales assistant is busy, but sees a customer who needs help)

Sales assistant: I'll be with you in a tick. Customer: OK, thanks.

Time phrases

Have you got the time? (= What time is it?)

Example conversation:

(At a train station)

Passenger 1: Excuse me? Have you got the time?

Passenger 2: Yes, it's five to six. 37. It's just gone... (time) (= It's just past...)

Example conversation:

Louise: Have you got the time?

Simon: Yes, it's just gone five thirty.

Asking someone to be quiet

Put a sock in it! (= Stop talking! i.e. put a sock in your mouth to stop speaking)

Example conversation:

(When a child keeps complaining about the same thing)

Dad: Oh put a sock in it! You aren't going to the fun fair, and that's that!

Shut it! (= Shut up!)

Example conversation

(Two boys arguing.)

Fraser: I'm going to tell Mum that you stole those sweets. Robert: Shut it!

Shopping

We're out of... (= We don't have any more ...)

Example conversation:

Lily: We're out of milk. Tom: I'll get some on the way home. 41.

We're running low on... (= We don't have much of ...)

Example conversation:

Colin: We're running low on sugar. Ivan: OK - I'll get some when I go out.

Keep the change! (= You can have the change)

Example conversation:

(In a pub)

Barman: That'll be £10.70 please.)

Customer: Here's £11. Keep the change!

Talking about work

I'm up to my ears in it! (= I'm really busy)

Example conversation:

Wendy: How's it going?

Peter: Well, I'm up to my ears in it at the moment...

I'm a bit tied up... (= I'm busy at the moment)

Example conversation:

Tony: Can you help me with this report?

Sue: I'm a bit tied up at the moment. Can it wait?

I've got my hands full... (= I'm busy at the moment)

Example conversation:

Laura: Can I give you this project, Kate?

Kate: Well, I've got my hands full with the other one. Games, competitions, etc

Your turn! (= It's your time to do something)

Example conversation:

Child A: Whose turn is it now?

Child B: It's your turn!

You go first. (= You are the first player.)

Example conversation:

(Three players need to roll the dice to start the game.)

Steven: Donna - you go first!

Donna: OK.

Time's up! (= When the time for an activity finishes)

Example conversation:

(In a game when a player has a limited time to answer a question)

Child 1: OK Mum! Time's up! What's your answer?

Mum: OK, I'm going to say 1812...

Ladies first! (= Women are allowed to be the first to do something)

Example conversation:

Dan: OK, ladies first! Jill: Who was the first person to walk on the moon?

Jill: That's an easy one!

Heads or tails? (= When you toss a coin to see which side faces up: the side which has the

face of the important person, or "heads"; or the other side of the coin, which is "tails")

Example conversation:

Ben: Let's toss for it. Heads or tails?

Penny: Head

Conditionals review

Meaning and use

Conditional sentences express a connection between two actions or states. One thing happens because of another. These connections can be general, specific, likely, unlikely, real or imagined.

Although there are quite a few different ways of forming conditional sentences there are common patterns known as zero, first, second and third conditionals.

Zero conditionals

Used to refer to general truths, scientific facts and the predictable results of particular actions. One thing happens and because of this something else happens. In zero conditionals **if** and **when** have the same meaning.

If you heat water enough, it boils.

When he scores, he celebrates by making a heart shape with his hands.

When it's raining, he stays indoors.

First conditionals

Used when we want to talk about something that is **likely** to happen in the future after a specific set of circumstances, the condition. **If** is used when the condition is possible and **when** is used when the condition is certain to happen.

If I go to the shops, I'll get some bread. (I might not go to the shops)

When I go to the shops, I'll get some bread. (I'm definitely going to the shops)

If you've finished your homework by six, you can go out and play.

When you're having your party, please keep the noise down!

Second conditionals

Refer to an imagined present result of an unlikely or impossible present condition.

If I had the money, I'd travel around the world. (I don't have the money)

If I were you, I'd think about leaving him. (I'm not you)

Third conditionals

Refer to an imagined past result of something that didn't happen in the past.

If I had known you were coming, I wouldn't have prepared the cheese dish.

(I didn't know you were coming. I prepared a cheese dish.)

If I had known then what I know now, I wouldn't have wasted so much time at university.

(I didn't know then what I know now. I did waste a lot of time at university.)

Form

Conditional sentences usually have two parts. There is the **if clause** (sometimes called the **conditional clause**) and the **result clause** (sometimes called the **main clause**). The clauses can come in any order.

If the **if clause** is first, the two clauses are separated by a comma.

There is no comma if the **result clause** is first.

Zero conditional

If clause:

if/when + present simple

Result clause:

present simple

When I turn it on, it makes a funny noise.

If you multiply ten by twelve, what do you get?

Milk goes bad if you leave it out too long.

First conditional

If clause:

if/when + present simple

Result clause:

will / 'll + infinitive without to / imperative

If it rains, you'll get wet.

If it rains, put your coat on.

If you're leading at half time, I'll let your dad know.

If you've won, give me a call as soon as possible.

Second conditional

If clause:

if + past simple (exception: verb **'to be'** takes **'were'** in 1st and 2nd person)

Result clause:

would / 'd + infinitive without to

If I knew what was wrong, I'd fix it myself.

I'd be out on my bike if it weren't raining so hard.

Third conditional

If clause:

if + past perfect

Main clause:

would / 'd + have / 've + past participle

If I'd known it'd break, I wouldn't have tried to pick it up.

If you hadn't insisted on changing your shirt we wouldn't've missed the bus.

Take note: modals

Most first, second and third conditional clauses commonly use **will** or **would** but it is possible to use other modal auxiliaries instead. For example:

First conditional

*If you go to the shops, **can** you get some bread, please?*

*If you go to the shops, **could** you get some bread, please?*

*If I go to the beach at the weekend, I **might** try out my new wet suit.*

*If I get a phone call this afternoon, it **may** be good news.*

*When we go on holiday this year, we **should** book a nicer hotel.*

Second conditional

*If I had enough money, I **could** travel around the world.*

*If I were elected, I **might** be able to do some good.*

Third conditional

*If you'd told me earlier, I **could've** done something about it.*

*If we had caught the right bus, we **might've been** on time.*

Take note: mixed conditionals

Mixed conditionals combine the structure of type 2 and type 3 conditionals when the time (past, present and future) referred to in the if and result clauses are not the same.

Mixed conditionals can refer to:

- something that didn't happen in the past and the result of that condition in the present

If you hadn't left the map at home, we wouldn't be lost.
(You left the map at home in the past. We are lost now.)

- something that won't happen in the future and the result of that condition on the past

If I weren't going on holiday next week, I could have accepted that offer of work.

(I am going on holiday in the future which is why I didn't accept the offer of work in the past.)

Grammar Reference - Linking devices of cause and effect

Linking devices are used to link one idea or argument to another. A common situation is when we are talking about something that happens and its result, or a **cause** and its **effect**.

- *[CAUSE] The population has increased. [EFFECT] The government is going to build more houses.*

Group 1: Therefore, consequently, as a result, thus

Form

These are also called **conjunctive adverbs**, and they all behave in the same way. This is how we use **consequently** to join two ideas together. Notice the comma after **consequently**:

- *The population has increased. **Consequently**, the government is going to build more houses.*

Or we could join the two sentences together using a **semi-colon + consequently + comma**:

- *The population has increased; **consequently**, the government is going to build more houses.*

But you **can't** just add **consequently** without a semi-colon or comma. This is wrong:

- *The population has increased **consequently** the government is going to build more houses.*

We can also replace **consequently** with any of the **Group 1** words or phrases:

- *The population has increased. **As a result**, the government is going to build more houses.*
- *The population has increased; **therefore**, the government is going to build more houses.*

Note

Therefore and **consequently** are used mainly in writing or formal speech. **Thus** is a little old-fashioned but is sometimes used in academic writing. **That's why** is very common in informal speech. In writing, we usually use it at the beginning of a sentence.

- *The traffic was terrible. **That's why** I'm late.*

Group 2: because of, as a result of, due to, owing to

Noun phrases and participle clauses

With Group 2 linking devices, the **cause** part is not a whole sentence or clause, it's a **noun phrase** (a phrase that behaves like a noun) or **participle clause** (a short phrase that begins with a verb, usually in the **-ing form**):

- **interest rate rises** (noun phrase)
- **rising interest rates** (participle clause)

Form

Let's imagine a **cause and effect** situation: interest rate rises are the **cause** of price increases. This is one way we could connect them using **owing to**:

- *The problem has increased **owing to interest rate rises**.*
- *The problem has increased **owing to rising interest rates**.*

In Group 1, the **linking device** usually comes **between** the **cause** and **effect** parts. **Cause** is always first, and **effect** is second.

With Group 2, the **cause** can come first or second, and the **linking device** moves with it. Notice that you need a comma after the **linking device** if it's in the first part of the sentence.

- ***As a result of interest rate rises**, the problem has increased.*
- *The problem has increased **as a result of interest rate rises**.*

Take note: The fact that

We can use **a group 2 phrase + the fact that + a verb phrase**:

- *The problem has increased **owing to the fact that interest rates are rising**.*

Take note: as a result and as a result of

As a result is in Group 1, and **as a result of** is in Group 2! They look very similar but behave differently.

Pronunciation

When you start a sentence with one of these linking devices, your voice starts high and then falls. After **therefore, consequently, as a result, for that reason, thus**, you often pause slightly before continuing.

Multi-word verbs - Meaning and use

A multi-word verb is a verb plus a word such as **in**, **on**, **out**, **up**, **away**, **off** and **down**. We often think of these words as prepositions, but here they behave like adverbs. The adverb sometimes extends the meaning of the verb on its own.

- *It's so annoying. Jason **keeps** phoning me all the time.*
- *It's so annoying. Jason **keeps on** phoning me all the time.*

Here, the phrasal verb **keeps on** means **continues**. It has the same meaning as **keeps** but is slightly stronger. Other phrasal verbs that extend the meaning of the main verb are **hurry up** and **sit down**.

Many verbs can go with different adverbs and the adverbs can completely change the meaning of the verb.

- *'When did you **break up**?'*
- *'Oh, I **broke off** our engagement ages ago. He **broke down** when I told him.'*

In this conversation, **break up** means **separate**, **broke off** means **ended** and **broke down** means **became very upset**. The meanings are different from the verb **break**.

Some phrasal verbs are intransitive (they have no object) for example: **keep on** and **hurry up**. Other phrasal verbs are transitive: they can be followed by a direct object, but not an object pronoun.

- *I **broke off** our engagement ages ago*
- ***NOT:** I broke off it.*

However, you can often put an object pronoun in the middle of a phrasal verb, between the verb and the adverb.

- *'Guess what! Rob **asked me out** yesterday!'*

Some verbs have three parts to them, an adverb and a preposition.

- *'Ah! I've seen you talking to Rob a lot recently. You seem to **get on with** him really well.'*

Form

No object

My car broke down.

No object

*My car **broke down**.*

Noun object

*Mark **broke out of** prison.*

Object pronoun after the verb

*Last week Ismail **broke up with** her.*

Object pronoun in the middle

*They were engaged, but they **broke it off**.*

Take note: phrasal verbs with direct objects

With phrasal verbs, (but not prepositional verbs), the noun object can usually go before or after the adverb.

- *I **broke off** our engagement. / I **broke** our engagement **off**.*

Pronunciation

For most phrasal verbs, the main stress is on the adverb.

- *When did you break **up**?'*
- *'Oh, I broke **off** our engagement ages ago. He broke **down** when I told him.'*

This is the same for three-part verbs.

- *I'm so **looking forward to** it!*

But for prepositional verbs, the stress is often on the main verb, not on the preposition.

- *I really can't **deal** with it.*

Multi-word verbs / Phrasal verbs type 1, 2, 3 & 4

Meaning and use

Multi-word verbs are verbs that combine with one or two particles, which may be adverbs or prepositions, to make new verbs. They are sometimes called phrasal verbs. A lot of common verbs do this and many of them can combine with several different particles. Each one changes the meaning of the verb.

*Shall we **give away** all the old books in the office?* (give them to someone else)

*He kept on arguing so in the end I **gave in**.* (decide to agree with someone)

*I'll just have water. I'm trying to **give up** coffee.* (stop doing or using something)

Sometimes you can guess the meaning of a phrasal verb because it is related to the main verb. Look at this example again.

*Shall we **give away** all the old books in the office?*

The meaning is clearly related to the verb **give**. In the other two examples above though, the meaning has completely changed.

Phrasal verbs are often used in spoken and informal English instead of a more formal verb.

*I don't believe that story. I think he **made it up!** (invented it)*

*Come to my office and we'll **talk it over.** (discuss it)*

*'Is the meeting still on today?' 'No, they've **called it off.**' (cancelled it)*

Form

There are four different types of phrasal verbs.

Type 1 Separable phrasal verbs

They are transitive (= they have an object). Most phrasal verbs are this type.

*He's **set up** a meeting. / He's **set** a meeting **up.***

*I've **worked out** the answer. / I've **worked** the answer **out.***

Notice that you can put the object after the phrasal verb, but you can also separate the main verb and the particle.

If you use an object pronoun, you must always separate the main verb and the particle.

*He's **set it up***

NOT: *He's set up it.*

Type 2 Non-separable phrasal verbs 1

They are transitive (= they have an object), but you can never separate the two parts of the verb. Prepositional verbs (verbs that are followed by a preposition and not an adverb) are always of this type.

You can **get on the bus** right outside the building.

NOT: You can get the bus on right outside the building.

I completely **disagree with him**.

NOT: I completely disagree him with.

Type 3 Non-separable phrasal verbs 2

They are intransitive (=they don't have an object) and you can't separate the two parts of the verb.

Watch out! There's a car coming.

Unfortunately the deal has **fallen through**.

Why don't you **drop in** on your way home?

Type 4 Three-part phrasal verbs

They have an adverb and a preposition followed by a direct object. You can't separate the parts of the phrasal verb.

Mark's **come up with** a brilliant new idea.

I was nervous, but determined to **go through with** it.

You should always **stand up for** what you think is right.

Take note: Type 3 and Type 4 phrasal verbs

Some phrasal verbs are both Type 3 and Type 4. You can add a preposition so that the Type 3 verb can have an object.

"Where's the paper for the photocopier?"

"I think we've **run out**. Jake! Have we **run out of paper** for the photocopier?"

Pronunciation

For most phrasal verbs, the main stress is on the adverb.

*He kept on arguing so in the end I gave **in**.*

*I don't think I can put **up** with it any more.*

But for prepositional verbs, the main stress is on the verb.

*I completely **agree** with you.*

Subject-object questions

Meaning and use

A simple way of asking questions in English is by using **interrogatives**, or **question words**, such as **who** or **what**. These questions are called **wh-questions** and are used when asking for information.

What time is it?

Who ate the biscuits?

Look at this sentence:

Sally met David Beckham.

We can ask about the **subject** or **object** of this sentence:

Asking about the subject: ***Who** met David Beckham? **Sally** met David Beckham.*

Asking about the object: ***Who** did Sally meet? Sally met **David Beckham**.*

The first question is a **subject question** because **who** refers to the **subject**. There is no auxiliary. The second question is

an **object question** because **who** refers to the **object** and comes before the auxiliary **did**.

Form

Subject questions with no auxiliary are formed with: **question word + verb + object**, where the verb agrees with the subject.

'Who speaks Japanese?' 'Kento speaks Japanese.'

'Who rang the doorbell?' 'The milkman rang the doorbell.'

'What caused the accident?' 'Bad weather caused the accident.'

Whose and **which** ask about **possession** and **choice**, and can be used in subject questions like this:

Whose horse finished the race first?

Which painting cost the most?

Take note: using 'what' or 'which'

As well as **which**, **what** is also used to ask about **choices**. If the choice is limited, we use **which** and this is usually followed by a noun.

What social networks do you use?

What happened to your shirt?

Which chair is yours?

Which of these restaurants has the best service?

Which hand do you write with?

Spoken English

In casual speech, **who is** or **who has** often becomes **who's**. This can cause problems for the listener because it sounds the same as the question word **whose**, which is used to show **possession**. **Whose** usually comes before a **noun**.

Who's coming for dinner?

Whose bike got stolen?

*Whose **hat** cost over £100?*

*Whose **mobile phone** still has a signal?*

Past simple and past continuous - Meaning and use

We use the past simple for something that happened and finished in the past. We use it when we say or know the time when something happened. It is often used in stories, when one thing happened after another.

*Last year, we **travelled** by jeep across the Sahara.*

*When the car **stopped**, we all **got** out.*

We use the past continuous for something that happened in the past but was not finished at a particular time. This can be an exact time in the past (12 o'clock, etc.) or the time when another thing happened.

*It was 12 o'clock and we **were standing** in the midday sun.*

*Mick **was checking** the engine when the rescue helicopter arrived.*

We also use the past continuous to describe a scene or situation in the past or for an action that continued for some time.

*The stars **were beginning** to come out.*

*The dog **was barking** loudly.*

Form

Past simple: positive

For regular verbs, the past simple ends in **-ed**. Irregular verbs have different forms. The past simple form is the same for all persons (*I, you, he, she, etc*).

*Suddenly the jeep **skidded** and **stopped**.*

*Jake **thought** that we had a puncture.*

Past continuous: positive

The past continuous is **subject + was/were + -ing form**. There are no short forms of **was/were**.

*Fortunately, we **were carrying** a toolkit.*

Past simple: negative

We make the negative past simple with **didn't + infinitive**.

*We **didn't stay** inside the jeep because that was even hotter.*

Past continuous: negative

We make the negative past continuous with **wasn't/weren't + -ing form**

*Despite the heat, Jess and Debs **weren't wearing** hats.*

Past simple: question

The past simple question form is **did + subject + infinitive** for all persons. The short answers are **Yes, I did.** / **No, I didn't.**

***Did** the helicopter **land** in the desert? Yes **it did**.*

Past continuous: question

The past continuous question form is **was/were + subject + -ing** form. The short answers are **Yes, I was.** / **No, I wasn't.**

*How **were you feeling** when it arrived?*

Take note: spelling changes

In the past continuous, all verbs end in **-ing**, but sometimes the spelling changes:

*take – **taking** hit – **hitting** die – **dying***

Take note: verbs we don't use in the past continuous

There are some verbs that we don't usually use in the continuous form. They are often verbs related to the senses and thinking, for example: **hear, see, smell, hate, know, understand, believe, notice, want, need, seem, wish.**

WRONG: ***Were you knowing** Jess when you were living in Madrid?*

CORRECT: ***Did you know** Jess when you were living in Madrid?*

Spoken English

In the past simple and the past continuous, we usually use a contraction with the negative auxiliary verb:

didn't (= did not) **wasn't** (= was not)

We usually say the positive and negative auxiliary verbs quickly and without emphasis. We don't usually pronounce the final 't' in 'didn't', 'wasn't' or 'weren't' in the flow of speech.

*He **wasn't looking** when his team scored a goal.*

/hi wɒzn 'lʊkɪŋ wɛn hɪz ti:m skɔ:d ə gəʊl/

But when the word following the contraction begins with a vowel sound, we pronounce the final 't':

*They were delayed, so they **didn't arrive** on time.*

/ðeɪ wə dɪ'leɪd, səʊ ðeɪ dɪdnt ə'raɪv ɒn taɪm/

Present and past modals of ability

Meaning and use

We use **can** or **be able to** for saying that somebody or something has the ability to do something. **Can** and **be able to** mean the same, but we often use **be able to** when something is surprising or unusual.

*Camels **can carry** up to 600 pounds on their backs.*

*They **are able to close** their noses to keep out the sand.*

To talk about ability in the past, we use **could** or **be able to**.

20 years ago, the Kalahari bushmen **could make** fire without matches.

They **were able to survive** without fresh water for three weeks.

For a single event in the past, we use **be able to** (not **could**) in positive statements.

Our guide **was able to show** us the caves where the bushmen lived.

NOT: Our guide **could show** us the caves where the bushmen lived.

However, in negative statements and questions about single events, we can use **could** or **be able to**.

Could you talk to the bushmen? **Were you able to talk** to the bushmen?

We **couldn't talk** to them. We **weren't able to talk** to them.

If something is very difficult to do or is very successful, we often use the verb **manage to** instead of a modal verb.

The bushmen **managed to live** happily in their natural environment for at least 20,000 years.

Form

After **can/can't** and **could/couldn't** we use the infinitive without **to**. We also use the same form for all persons: I, you, he, she, it, we, they. After **be able to** we use the infinitive without **to** as well, but the form of **be** changes: **am/are/is able to** for the present and **was/were able to** for the past.

Positive

In Yakutia, the people **can speak** both Yakut and Russian.
They **are able to survive** in temperatures of -70.

Negative

*They **can't grow** vegetables in winter, so they eat a lot of meat and fish.*

*Most people **aren't able to travel** in winter because of the freezing weather.*

Questions

In questions with **can**, **could** and **be able to**, we change the word order. We don't use **Do/Does**. **Can**, **could** or the verb **be** come before the subject or subject pronoun.

*How **can the people survive** in temperatures of -70?*

*Why **aren't they able to travel** in winter?*

***Could they leave** the area by April?*

Take note: 'be able to' with infinitives and present perfect

Can has no infinitive form or present perfect form. So in some sentences, we have to use **be able to**.

*I'd like to **be able to speak** Russian. (infinitive)*

*We **haven't been able to contact** them by phone yet. (present perfect)*

Take note: form of 'manage to'

Manage to is a regular verb in the positive form. But in the negative form we say **can't manage to** in the present and **couldn't** or **didn't manage to** in the past. We also use **did** for questions.

*I **can't manage to eat** all that!*

*They **couldn't/didn't manage to finish** the race.*

***Did** you really **manage** to swim across the Channel?*

Take note: sense verbs and verbs of thinking

We usually use **can** and not **be able to** with sense verbs and verbs of thinking such as **see**, **hear**, **smell**, **believe**, **remember**.

*I **can see** the Lena River from here.*

*I **can't believe** that it gets so cold there.*

*The bushmen **could remember** their way around the desert from day to day.*

'Used to' and 'would'

Meaning and use

We can use **used to** and **would** to talk about things we did regularly in the past, but we don't do now. We use **used to** for either habits or states in the past. **Would** is used only for past habits, not for past states.

- *Elena **used to** visit her grandson on Saturdays, but now she visits him on Sundays. (past habit)*
- *On Fridays, we **would** take a long walk after lunch. (past habit)*
- *The weather **didn't use to** be so cold in May. (past state)*

NOT: The weather **wouldn't** be so cold in May.

Used to and **would** often have the idea of comparison or change over time.

- *Elena **used to** visit her grandson on Saturdays but now she visits him on Sundays.*
- *We **would** take a long walk after lunch (but now we do not.)*
- *The weather **didn't use to** be so cold in May. (now, it is cold in May)*

Form

The different forms of these phrases are **used to + infinitive (without 'to')** or **did / did not / didn't + use to + infinitive (without 'to')**, and **would / would not / wouldn't + infinitive (without 'to')**.

Used to is the simple past. **Use to** is used in negative and question forms. It is used for both habits and states.

Used to - Habit

- *Isabel **used to** sing in a band.*
- *Pablo **didn't use to** drive to work.*
- ***Did** John **use to** study with you?*

Used to - State

- *Bob **used to** be much shorter.*
- *I **didn't use to** like art.*
- ***Did** Wayne **use to** belong to the debate team?*
- ***Didn't** Margaret **use to** hate flying?*

Would - Habit (not for states)

- *Since I always had that day free, I **would** shop for groceries every Monday.*
- *Since we were always in a hurry, we **wouldn't** stop for tea on Fridays.*
- ***Would** you often stay for lunch?*

Take note: adverbs

Used to and **would** already show that something happened in the past. We don't usually add adverbs. But, if you want to stress a time period, you can add an adverb.

- *I **didn't use to** travel **frequently**, but now I do.*
- *Nancy **would** go for a jog **every day**, but now she doesn't have enough time.*

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