

Used to (do)

A

Study this example situation:

a few years ago*these days*

Nicola doesn't travel much these days.

She prefers to stay at home.

But she **used to travel** a lot.She **used to go** away two or three times a year.She **used to travel** a lot = she travelled a lot often in the past, but she doesn't do this any more.

she used to travel

past

she doesn't
travel

now

B

Something **used to** happen = it happened often in the past, but no longer happens:

- ☐ I **used to play** tennis a lot, but I don't play very much now.
- ☐ David **used to spend** a lot of money on clothes. These days he can't afford it.
- ☐ 'Do you go to the cinema much?' 'Not now, but I **used to.**' (= I used to go)

We also use **used to** ... for things that were true, but are not true any more:

- ☐ This building is now a furniture shop. It **used to be** a cinema.
- ☐ I **used to think** Mark was unfriendly, but now I realise he's a very nice person.
- ☐ I've started drinking tea recently. I never **used to like** it before.
- ☐ Lisa **used to have** very long hair when she was a child.

C

'I **used to** do something' is past. There is no present. You cannot say 'I use to do'.

To talk about the present, use the present simple (I **do**).

Compare:

<i>past</i>	he used to play	we used to live	there used to be
<i>present</i>	he plays	we live	there is

- ☐ We **used to live** in a small village, but now we **live** in London.
- ☐ There **used to be** four cinemas in the town. Now there **is** only one.

D

The normal question form is **did** (you) **use to** ... ?:

- ☐ **Did** you **use to eat** a lot of sweets when you were a child?

The negative form is **didn't use to** ... (**used not to** ... is also possible):

- ☐ I **didn't use to** like him. (or I **used not to** like him.)

E

Compare **I used to do** and **I was doing**:

- ☐ I **used to watch** TV a lot. (= I watched TV often in the past, but I no longer do this)
- ☐ I **was watching** TV when Rob called. (= I was in the middle of watching TV)

F

Do not confuse **I used to do** and **I am used to doing** (see Unit 61). The structures and meanings are different:

- ☐ I **used to live** alone. (= I lived alone in the past, but I no longer live alone)
- ☐ I **am used to living** alone. (= I live alone, and I don't find it strange or difficult because I've been living alone for some time)