

GRAMMAR

# Talking about the past with *used to*

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN\_B1\_1102G

LANGUAGE

English



## Learning outcomes

- I can talk about the past with *used to*.
- I can use *used to* and *didn't use to* to talk about how habits or repeated actions in the past are no longer true.



# Warm-up

**Choose** a question from the list to ask one of your classmates.



What's the name of the place where you grew up?

Who did you live with as a child?

What was your favourite TV programme when you were young?

What hobbies did you have as a child?



# Visiting James

1. **Read** this conversation between **Thomas (36)** and his grandfather **James (85)**.
2. Then **answer** the questions below.

**James:** When I was your age, I used to think life was just about earning money. Trust me, one day you'll understand me when I say that spending time with family is what matters!

**Thomas:** You're right. I should spend more time with you.

**James:** That would be nice. You used to visit twice a week. Since your grandma died, I've been on my own quite a lot.

**Thomas:** I miss grandma. Do you remember how she always used to put music on in the living room?

**James:** Oh yes! Your grandma and I always had a lot of fun. When we were your age, we used to go out dancing all the time! People didn't use to worry as much as they do today.



1. What is Thomas talking about with James?
2. Has family always been an important part of life to James?
3. What did James do a lot of when he was younger?



# Talking about a past state or habit with *used to*

1. **Read** the quote below from the text on slide 4.
2. **Then answer** the questions in the blue box.



James

**We used to go out dancing all the time!**

- Did James go out dancing a lot when he was younger?
- Do you think James goes out dancing a lot now?

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## Looking more closely at *used to*

We **used to** go out dancing all the time. (= but *now* we don't)

- Think about what you read in the text. What are some things that might have caused James to not go out dancing as much as he used to?

- When we use ***used to* + bare infinitive**, we are saying that something has **changed**.
- We use ***used to* + bare infinitive** to talk about **past habits and states** which, for some reason, have stopped or are no longer true.

# Using *used to* correctly

1. **Compare** the sentences below (one of them is incorrect).
2. Then **answer** the questions in the blue box.

When James was Thomas's age, he **used to** work 80 hours a week.

James **used to** work 80 hours last week.

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- Which sentence is **correct**? Which sentence is **incorrect**? Why?
- We don't use ***used to*** to say what happened at a specific past time. Instead, we use ***used to*** to talk about a regular past habit or state that has stopped for some reason.



# Using *used to* for regular habits in the past

Fill in the boxes below with the labels: *subject*, *used to*, and *bare infinitive*.

We **used to** go out dancing all the time!

*Used to* for regular habits in the past

1.



2.



3.

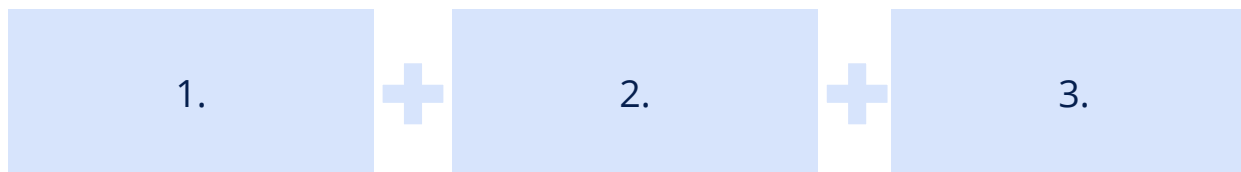


# Using *used to* in a negative statement

Fill in the boxes below with the labels: *didn't use to*, *subject* and *bare infinitive*. Then answer the questions in the blue box below.

People **didn't use to** worry as much as they do today.

Using *used to* in a negative statement



- What **auxiliary verb** is used in the example sentence above?
- Why do we say didn't **use** to and not didn't **used** to?

# A closer look at the conversation

1. **Take another look** at the conversation. You do not need to read the text out loud again.
2. **Find more examples of *used to***.
3. **Write** three of your examples in the boxes below.

**James:** When I was your age, I used to think life was just about earning money. Trust me, one day you'll understand me when I say, spending time with family is what matters!

**Thomas:** You're right. I should spend more time with you.

**James:** That would be nice. You used to visit twice a week. Since your grandma died, I've been on my own quite a lot.

**Thomas:** I miss grandma. Do you remember how she always used to put music on in the living room?

**James:** Oh yes! Your grandma and I always had a lot of fun. When we were your age, we used to go out dancing all the time! People didn't use to worry as much as they do today.



Example 1:

Example 2:

Example 3:



# Fill in the blanks

Complete the sentences with *used to* or *didn't use to*.

1 I \_\_\_\_\_ like pineapple when I was younger, but I love it now.

2 When we were kids, we \_\_\_\_\_ play outside every day.

3 Discos \_\_\_\_\_ be as crowded as they are nowadays.

4 I \_\_\_\_\_ be really sporty when I was younger.

5 I \_\_\_\_\_ feel very confident, but then I started working out and it really helped.



# Talking about how things have changed and why

James tells Thomas more about some things that have changed in his life. **Pair the beginnings of his sentences with their endings.**

1 I **used to run** a lot...

a ...but when my children left home, I realised that money wasn't as important as family.

2 I **used to think** money was everything...

b ...but since she died, I no longer go.

3 I **didn't use to read** a lot...

c ...but I stopped because my knees started to hurt.

4 I **used to drink** a lot of coffee...

d ...but it started to irritate my stomach and so I switched to tea.

5 I **used to go** to the same resort every summer with your grandma...

e ...but now I do because I have much more time.



# What do you think?

1. **Look** at the pictures and the information below them.
2. Take 3 minutes to **answer** this question: What has changed in these people's lives?
3. Together as a class or in breakout rooms, **build sentences** using *used to* and *didn't use to*.
4. **Share** your ideas.



**Colin (45) former professional athlete**



**Sara (40), recently self-employed**



**Tim (22) graphic designer**



**Melissa (20) new intern**



**Richard (70) retired comic book artist**

*Colin used to...*

*Melissa didn't use to...*



# Discuss

**What are some places you used to go to on holiday with your family, but you don't go to anymore?  
Why don't you go to these places anymore?**



**What are some things you do, but your grandparents didn't use to do?**





# Discuss



**People didn't use to worry as much as they do today.**

Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

What's something you used to worry about when you were younger but don't worry about today? Why?

What's something that you didn't use to worry about but worry about today? Why?





# End of the lesson

Idiom

***Time flies.***

**Meaning:** Time passes surprisingly quickly.



# Additional practice



# Complete the sentences

Fill in the sentences with **used to** or **didn't use to**.



- 1 I \_\_\_\_\_ play the piano, but I do now.
- 2 John \_\_\_\_\_ collect stamps, but he does now.
- 3 We \_\_\_\_\_ ride the bus, but we don't anymore.
- 4 Kelly \_\_\_\_\_ be afraid of flying, but she isn't anymore.
- 5 Paul \_\_\_\_\_ be worried about the environment, but he is now.





# Discuss

**Choose one of the topics down below.** Talk about your old habits and what you do differently now.



work

family and friends

hobbies and interests

dreams and goals





## Discuss

**In the past, things used to be so much better.**

**Do you agree with this statement?  
What used to be better, what used to be worse?**



## Answer Key

**P.4:** 1. Thomas is talking about spending more time with James and also about his grandma (James's wife). 2. No, when he was younger, money was more important than family 3. When James was younger he used to go out dancing all the time.

**P.5:** 1. James means that they used to go out dancing often 2. No, James does not go out dancing often now.

**P.8:** subject + used to + bare infinitive

**P. 9:** subject + didn't use to + bare infinitive

**P.11:** 1. didn't use to 2. used to 3. didn't use to 4. used to 5. didn't use to

**P. 12:** 1. (c) 2. (a) 3. (e) 4. (d) 5. (b)

**P.19:** 1. didn't use to 2. didn't use to 3. used to 4. used to 5. didn't use to



# Summary

## Used to:

- We use **used to** to talk about **habits** or **repeated actions** in the past which we don't do in the present.
- We also use it to talk about states in the past which are **no longer true**.

## Didn't use to:

- We use **didn't use to + verb** to talk about **habits** or **repeated actions** in the past in the negative.

## Vocabulary:

- That's what matters, Trust me, to make an effort, used to, didn't use to



# Vocabulary

used to

That's what matters!

Trust me, ...



## Notes