

Grammar Reference

Meaning and use of used to and be/get used to

We use **used to + the infinitive** to talk about an action that happened regularly in the past but doesn't happen now. **Used to** is different to the past simple because it emphasises that the action was repeated many times.

*I **used to drive** to work every day but now I cycle. It's better for the environment.*

We also use **used to + the infinitive** for past situations. It emphasises that the situations are no longer true.

*There **used to be** lots of old forests here, but sadly they've all been cut down.*

*I never **used to get** any exercise when I drove to work, so cycling's great.*

It's easy to confuse **used to + the infinitive** with **be/get used to** but the meanings are very different.

You use **be used to** to say that something isn't new, unusual or difficult for you. You have experienced it many times. You use **get used to** to say that you are gradually finding something less unusual or difficult. Both **be used to** and **get used to** can be followed by a noun/pronoun or the **-ing** form of the verb. They are never followed by the infinitive.

*Cycling was hard work at first, but **I'm used to it** now and I really enjoy it.*

***I'm used to getting up** a bit earlier so that I get to work on time.*

We can use **be/get used to** with present, past and future tenses.

'Why did you find it so hard at first?'

*'Well, because I **wasn't used to** cycling then.'*

*'How long did it take you to **get used to cycling**?'*

*'Oh, I **got used to it** after a couple of weeks. You should try it too. You'll **get used to it** in no time.'*

Form of used to + infinitive

Positive

Subject + used to + infinitive.

*I **used to be stuck** in traffic jams day after day.*

NOT: *I am used to be stuck in traffic jams day after day.*

Negative

Subject + didn't use to + infinitive. We can also use **never used to + infinitive**. In more formal or written English, **used not to + infinitive** is sometimes used.

*I **didn't use to get** any exercise. / I **never used to get** any exercise. / I **used not to get** any exercise.*

Questions and short answers

Did + subject + use to + infinitive.

*'**Did it use to take** you a long time to get to work?'*

*'Yes, **it did**.' / 'Yes, **it used to**.'*

Form of be/get used to

Positive

Subject + be/get used to + noun/pronoun or + -ing.

***I'm used to getting** wet on the way to work when it rains!*

***My legs have got used to the exercise** at last.*

Negative

Subject + not be/not get used to + noun/pronoun or + -ing.

*My colleagues were amused because **they weren't used to seeing** me arrive on a bike.*

*If you don't try, **you won't get used to new ways** of doing things.*

Questions and short answers

Be + subject + used to + noun/pronoun or + -ing?

And

Auxiliary verb + subject + get used to + noun/pronoun or + -ing?

*'**Are your colleagues used to you cycling** to work now?' 'Yes, **they are**.'*

*'**Did they get used to it quickly**?' 'Yes, **they did**.'*

Take note: used to

Used to is about the past so there is no present or future form. For the present we say

*I **usually cycle** to work.*

NOT: *I use to cycle to work.*

Take note: didn't use to and did you use to

In the negative **didn't use to** and the question **did you use to**, notice that there is no **d** on **use**. This is correct English, although people sometimes put a **d** on the end.

Pronunciation

Used is pronounced in the same way in **used to** and **be/get used to**. It has a soft /s/ sound and we don't pronounce the letter **d** at the end of **used**. We use the weak form of **to** /tə/ except in the short answer **Yes, I used to**, where it is pronounced as /tu:/.

