

Grammar Reference

Used to

Meaning and use

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.

Form

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.

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 final **d** on **use**. This is correct English, although people sometimes put a **d** on the end.

Pronunciation

Used 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:/.

