

Extension exercises

Chapter 17: *used to* and *would* | Comments

Comparing languages

Although answers to these questions will depend on the language you choose, few languages make the same distinctions as English.

Many European languages have an imperfect tense which is used to describe events, activities and states which take place over a period of time. Depending on the context, this can often be used to translate *used to* and *would* (and also the past simple and past continuous when they are used to describe extended actions).

Some languages use expressions involving nouns (similar to *had the habit of ...*) or adjectives (similar to *was accustomed to ...*) in contexts where it is really important to stress the habitual nature of something. Some learners often avoid using either *used to* or *would*, and they may over-use expressions like *was accustomed to ...*

Exploring English

Answers to these questions will depend on the texts you choose. Most writing reveals a large degree of personal stylistic choice on the part of the writer. In careful and well-crafted writing, there is usually some variety of forms. Repetition of one form or the other may be in order to create a particular effect.

Course materials

Precise answers to these questions will depend on the materials you choose.

- 1 At higher levels materials often compare and contrast uses of *used to* and *would*, usually in revision exercises which assume that the two forms have been studied independently at earlier stages of learning.
- 2 *Used to* is often taught at an early intermediate level, and this use of *would* is often taught at a much higher level, when it is assumed that the learners are already confident with other uses of *would*.
- 3 This varies considerably.
- 4 Materials sometimes fail to make this clear, giving learners the impression that they must use one of these forms to talk, for example, about past habits.
- 5 This varies considerably, but often includes very controlled 'gap-filling' exercises and freer, extended narratives.