

# TALK ABOUT PAST HABITS

Talking about our past is a natural part of everyday conversation. People often share stories about their childhood, school experiences, or routines that were common years ago but are no longer true today. In English, one of the most useful structures for describing past routines is **used to**. This expression helps us communicate how life has changed—what we did before and what we do now.

Understanding and using *used to* allows you to talk about school activities, old hobbies, childhood habits, or traditions that were part of your life. Whether you are describing a sport you practiced, a club you attended, or a routine your family followed, this structure makes your stories clearer and more natural.

## 1. What Does *Used to* Mean?

The expression **used to** describe an action, state, or habit that was true in the past but is no longer true now.

### Key idea:

✓ *used to* = past habit or repeated action no longer true in the present

### Examples:

- *I used to play soccer after school.* (I don't play now.)
- *She used to be very shy.* (She is not shy anymore.)
- *We used to have a science club at school.* (The club no longer exists.)

This structure allows speakers to highlight **change**, which is a central concept when talking about past school life or childhood experiences.

## 2. Form and Structure

To use *used to* correctly, it's important to understand its grammar pattern.

# TALK ABOUT PAST HABITS

Form	Structure	Example
<b>Affirmative</b>	subject + used to + base verb	<i>I used to ride my bike to school.</i>
<b>Negative</b>	subject + didn't use to + base verb	<i>I didn't use to like English classes.</i>
<b>Interrogative</b>	Did + subject + use to + base verb?	<i>Did you use to attend the art club?</i>

## Important notes:

- In negative and question forms, the verb changes to **use** without “d.”
- The verb after *used to* is always in **base form**.

## 3. Past Habits vs. Present Habits

One of the clearest uses of *used to* is to compare past and present situations.

Time	Expression	Example
<b>Past habit</b>	<i>used to</i>	<i>I used to spend hours in the library.</i>
<b>Present habit</b>	usually / often / now	<i>Now I usually study at home.</i>

## Example in context:

- *I used to participate in the school choir, but now I focus more on sports.*
- *We used to have long recess breaks. Now we only have 20 minutes.*

These comparisons make stories richer and help listeners understand how your routines have changed over time.

## 4. Narrative Example - “My School Days”

*Read this short narrative to see how used to works naturally in a story.*

When I was in middle school, my days looked very different from now. I used to walk to school every morning, because it was just a few blocks away from my house.

# TALK ABOUT PAST HABITS

I used to belong to the science club, and every Wednesday we met after school to do small experiments. My best friend used to help me with my projects, and we even won a small competition one year.

School lunches were also special. The cafeteria used to serve homemade food, and everyone loved the pasta days. During recess, most students used to play soccer or sit under the big tree near the courtyard. Life felt simple and predictable.

Today, my routine has completely changed. I study online, I no longer belong to a club, and I don't walk to school anymore. Still, those past habits helped me build friendships, learn new skills, and discover what I enjoyed the most.

## 5. Dialogues with *Used To*

Seeing *used to* in natural conversation helps you recognize how English speakers use it spontaneously.

### Dialogue 1 - Talking About School Clubs

A: Did you use to join any clubs when you were in high school?

B: Yes! I used to be in the drama club.

A: Really? What did you do there?

B: We used to practice after school and present a play every semester.

**Why this works:** The speakers talk about activities that were routine in the past but are no longer part of their lives.

### Dialogue 2 - Describing Childhood Habits

A: I didn't use to like reading when I was a kid.

B: Me neither! But I used to watch documentaries all the time.

A: That's interesting. Did you use to collect anything?

B: Yes, I used to collect stickers from my favorite shows.

# TALK ABOUT PAST HABITS

## Dialogue 3 - Comparing Past and Present

A: Our school used to have a big art festival every year.

B: I remember that! But now they only do small events.

A: Yes, things have changed a lot.

B: True. Students used to spend more time in clubs.

## 6. Common Mistakes with *Used To*

Understanding typical errors can help you avoid them.

Incorrect	Correct	Explanation
I use to play tennis.	I used to play tennis.	Affirmative always uses "used."
I didn't used to play tennis.	I didn't use to play tennis.	After didn't, use the base form.
Did you used to play tennis?	Did you use to play tennis?	Questions also require use (no "d").

## 7. Short Reading - "Before School Changed"

Here is a short descriptive reading to reinforce the structure naturally.

Ten years ago, my school routine was completely different. Students used to bring their own notebooks, and teachers used to check homework by hand. We used to sit in fixed rows, and nobody had a laptop or tablet. After school, many of us used to stay for tutoring sessions or join small study groups. Today, everything is digital, classrooms are flexible, and learning happens in many different ways. Even though the school looks different now, those past habits remind me of how education has evolved.

**Reference:**

*My Lingua Academy. 2026). Talking about Past Habits in English. My Lingua Academy.*

Recovered from: <https://myenglishteacher.co.uk/2024/01/25/talking-about-past-habits-in-english/>