

Topic 13:

Used to and would





The difference between **USED TO** and **WOULD**



Used to and **would** are both use to describe something that happened regularly in the past but doesn't happen any longer, as shown in the following two sentences about quitting smoking:

- ➔ I **used to** smoke, but I quit last year.
- ➔ Whenever I craved a cigarette, I **would** chew gum instead.

However, there are two important differences between **used to** and **would**. The first difference is that **would** should not be used unless it has already been established that the time frame is in the past, while **used to** does not require this. This example, with **used to** at the beginning, sounds natural:

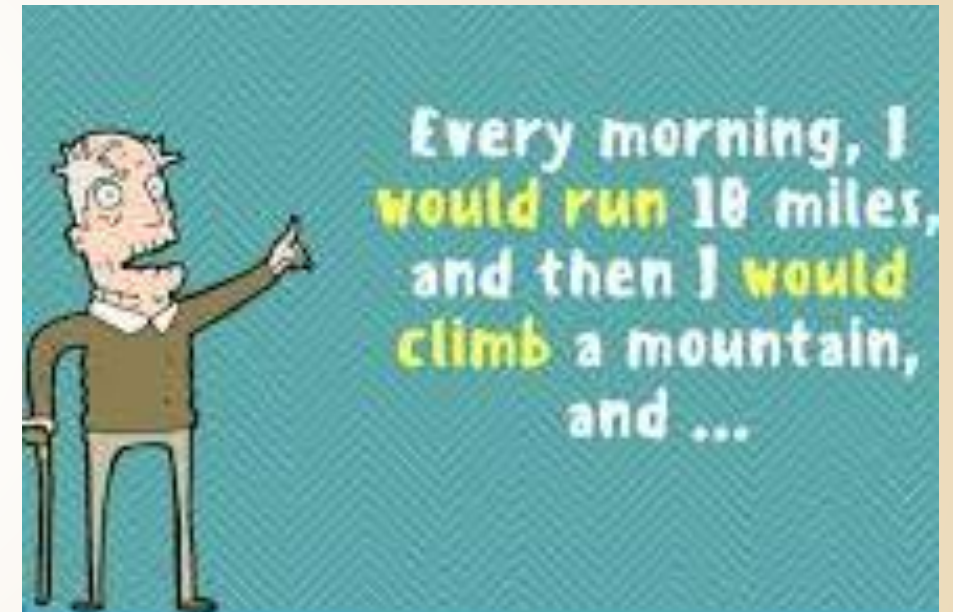
➡ I **used to** watch cartoons every Saturday morning when I was very little. Now I rarely watch TV.

However, when **used to** is replaced with **would**, the same example becomes awkward and ungrammatical:

➡ *I ~~would watch~~ cartoons every Saturday morning when I was very little. Now I rarely watch TV.

But if the past time frame is established before **would** appears, **would** sounds fine.

➔ When I was little, I **would** get up and watch cartoons every Saturday morning. Now I rarely watch TV.



The second difference between **used to** and **would** is that **would** is not used with stative verbs such as *love*, *be*, *understand*, and *feel*. Compare these two sentences with the stative verb *love*:

- When I was a student, I **used to** *love* sleeping late on the weekends. (natural and grammatical)

- *When I was a student, I ~~**would** *love*~~ sleeping late on weekends. (awkward and ungrammatical)

To summarize, the use of **would** is more restricted than that of **used to**. Therefore, if you aren't sure which one to use, it's best to choose **used to**.



Choose the correct form to complete the sentences. Sometimes both are possible.

1. She *used to / would* get up at 5 a.m. when she was small.
2. Dorothy *used to / would* live in a haunted house.
3. The haunted room *used to / would* be a bedroom.
4. He *wouldn't use to / wouldn't* play in the haunted room.
5. I *didn't use to / wouldn't* believe in monsters or aliens.
6. *Did you use to / would you* stay up late when you were young?