



1st semester

Topic 8:

Grammar: Habitual actions



HABITUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE PRESENT

A. The present simple is used for habitual actions or permanent situations in the present.

E.g. I go for a run twice a week. She lives near the park.

B. Frequency adverbs are used to indicate how often an action occurs. They are usually placed:

1. **Before the main verb.** E.g. I always go to bed before midnight.

2. **After the verb to be or an auxiliary verb.** E.g. She is very often late for work.

E.g. They have rarely been seen together.

3. *Usually, normally, frequently, sometimes, (very/ quite)often and occasionally* can also be placed at the beginning of the sentence or clause.

E.g. Occasionally we go out to the cinema, but usually we stay in and watch a DVD.

NB *always, rarely, seldom, hardly ever and never* cannot be used in the same way.

4. *Sometimes* and *quite/not very often* can be placed at the end of the sentence or clause.

E.g. Farm vets have to do some pretty unpleasant things sometimes.

E.g. I don't go to the cinema very often.

5. Adverb phrases such as *now* and *again*, *from time to time*, *twice a week* and *every day* are placed at the beginning or end of a clause or sentence, but not between the subject and the verb.

E.g. I see Paul at work every day and from time to time we have lunch together.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The present continuous + **always** is used to talk about things which occur frequently and which the speaker finds annoying.

E.g. He's always complaining about something!

2. Adjectives can be used as an alternative to *rarely*, *normally* and *(not) usually*.

E.g. It's rare/normal/(un)usual for him to eat meat.

3. **Tend to** + infinitive is used to make general statements about the habitual actions and situations of groups of people or individuals.

E.g. British people tend to drink tea rather than coffee.

E.g. I tend not to get up very early on Sundays.

4. **Will** + infinitive is used to talk about habitual behavior. Frequency adverbs can also be added.

E.g. She'll sometimes spend the whole day reading.

5. *It's not like someone to do something* is used to suggest that the way a person has behaved is not typical of their character.

E.g. I'm surprised graham didn't send me a card. It's not like him to forget my birthday.(He doesn't usually forget it)

HABITUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE PAST

A. The past simple is used for regular actions or habitual behavior in the past, often with a frequency adverb.

E.g. I hardly ever went away on holiday when I was young.

B. Used to + infinitive is used to refer to past habits and situations which no longer occur or exist now. Frequency adverbs can be used for emphasis and are placed before *used to*.

E.g. We used to have a cat, but he died last year.

E.g. I always used to walk to work until I bought a car.

Note the negative and question forms:

E.g. I didn't use to like cheese. Where did you use to live?

NB use to cannot express present habitual behavior.

E.g. I usually (not use to) play tennis twice a week.

C. Would + infinitive is used to refer to past habits, but not past situations. Frequency adverbs are placed after would.

Habit: E.g. My father would often read to me when I was a young boy.

Situation: E.g. I used to(not would) have a bicycle.

Stative verbs such as *have (possession), be, like, live, believe, think(=have an opinion), understand* and *know* are not used with would to refer to the past.

Be used to/get used to + noun or gerund

➔ Be used to + **noun/gerund** means 'to be accustomed to'.

E.g. She's nurse so she's s used to seeing sick people.

➔ Get used to + **noun/gerund** means 'become accustomed to'.

E.g. I want to leave Athens; I can't get used to the heat.



You can also use these expressions to talk about habits:

keep doing something = tend to do something

have a habit of doing = have a tendency of doing something

be apt to do something = be prone to do something