
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The Grammar Gameshow

Used to and would

The logo for BBC Learning English, featuring the letters 'BBC' in a white box above the words 'LEARNING ENGLISH' in white text on a teal background.

Will

Hello, and welcome to today's Grammar Gameshow! I'm your host, Will! But I won't! And of course let's not forget Leslie, our all-knowing voice in the sky.

Leslie

Hello everyone!

Will

Tonight we're going to ask you three questions about...

Leslie

Used to and Would! Those useful words for talking about past habits.

Will

OK! Now, let's meet our contestants!

Mike

Hi everyone. I'm Mike!

Will

And contestant number two?

Jay

Hi, Will. I'm Jay!

Will

Welcome back, Mike! OK! Let's get going. And don't forget you can play along at home too. Ok. Our first question is a quick-fire question, so fingers on the buzzers. Which verb form follows used to or would?

Jay

A verb with no to?

Will

Leslie?

Leslie

Good job, Jay. You are correct. After using used to or would, we use a bare infinitive verb. That's a verb with no to, for example: I used to go every day. I would go every day.

Will

Jay, you get two points. Now for our second question - and this is multiple choice. Look at these four sentences. One of them is incorrect. Which one is it, and why?

- a) I used to go running every day.
- b) I would go running every day.
- c) I used to be shorter.
- d) I would be shorter.

Jay

I used to go running every day?

Will

No. I'm sorry that's not right. I can give you another try.

Jay

B! I would go running every day.

Will

Oh...this is awkward. Wrong again. Care to try a third time?

Jay

Errrrr...C? I used to be shorter.

Will

No. Three strikes, and you're out I'm afraid. Mike, why don't you give it a try?

Mike

Ok. D! I would be shorter.

Will

Is the right answer! And why?

Mike

Because he chose the other three answers?

Will

Right again! Leslie?

Leslie

Yep. D is incorrect because used to and would talk about past habits. But unlike used to, would can only talk about actions, not states. Be is a state, so it is incorrect!

Will

Well done! 2 points for you! Alright...on to our third and last question. How does used to change when used as a positive, negative and question?

Mike

Errrrmm...it's the D! In the positive used to has a D, but in the negative and the question, we change the spelling, so no D.

Will

And how does this affect the pronunciation?

Mike

Errmmm.....it doesn't?

Will

Leslie?

Leslie

Perfectly right again. When used to is put into the negative or a question, it changes spelling and loses a D. However, this does not affect its pronunciation. For example: I used to dance. I didn't use to dance. Did you use to dance?

Will

We all used to dance, Leslie....we all did....Well done! I point for you! Well that brings us to the end of today's Grammar Gameshow. Let's count out the points. And the winner is.... Mike with 58 points. Well done! Here's what you've won!

Leslie

A pot of jam!

Will

Fantastic! Spread the love. And how did you do at home? We'll see you again next week, where you can play for an even bigger prize. And Jay? You had some good answers, but it just wasn't meant to be.

Jay

Yes. I certainly...

Will

Bring forth the lions. It looks like we'll need another contestant. Thanks for joining us. Say

goodbye Leslie.

Leslie

Goodbye Leslie!

Will

See you again next time!