



Pearson

Grammar

B2

past tenses, *used to* and *would*

Recommended for:

Gold Experience

Focus

High Note

2019



It's easier to understand when we **use** the different past tenses if we compare them.

Let's look at:

1. The past simple, past continuous, past perfect simple, and past perfect continuous – we often call these the past narrative tenses.
2. *used to* and *would*.



When do we use the past narrative tenses?

Function: When do we use them?

1. past narrative tenses

Read the sections of the story and answer the questions.



In 1992, my dad got a new job in London, so we had to leave Liverpool. The day we moved, I was unpacking my things in my new bedroom when my older sister came in. When we were younger, she was always taking my clothes without asking, and I hated her being in my room. But today was different. She started crying – she was hoping to stay in Liverpool near her friends, but it didn't happen.

Look at this sentence:
In 1992, my dad got a new job. Does this action have any relation to the present or did it finish in the past?

It finished in the past (1992)

Look at this sentence:
I was unpacking when my sister came in. Which of the two actions was interrupted?

I was unpacking my things.

She was always taking my clothes. Does this action refer to an event in the story or an annoying habit that happened many times in the past?

An annoying habit – a criticism

She was hoping to stay in Liverpool. This was an expectation or plan. Was it successful or did it fail?

It was a failed plan/expectation

Function: When do we use them?

1. past narrative tenses

Read the sections of the story and answer the questions.



Earlier that day, she had visited her best friend to say goodbye. At 3 p.m. when I arrived to say we were leaving, they had been crying for about two hours!

Look at this section of the story: **Earlier that day, she had visited her best friend.** The main part of this story is set in the new house in London. What other time is mentioned here?

Earlier that day (the day of the move)

It started earlier in the day and finished at 3 p.m.

A continuous action over a period of time

At 3 p.m. when I arrived, they had been crying.
When did this action start and when did it finish?

At 3 p.m. when I arrived, they had been crying.
Was it one event or a continuous action over a period of time?

Function: When do we use them?

1. past narrative tenses

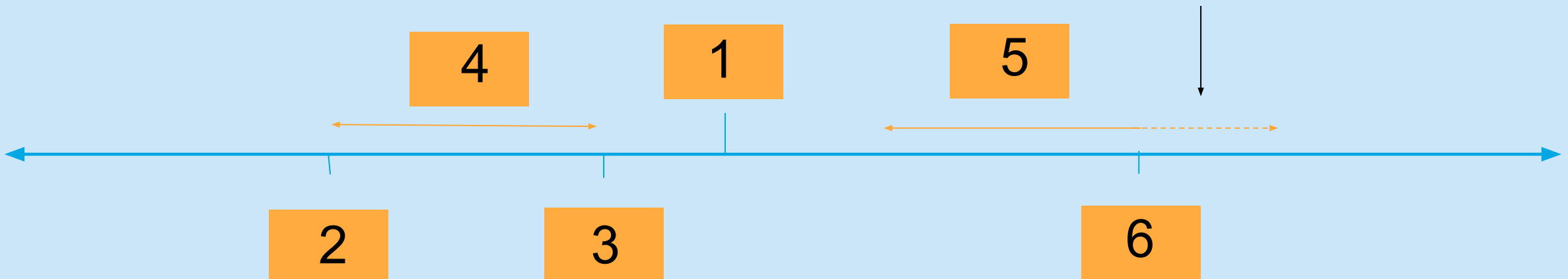


Read the sections of the story and answer the questions.

Put these events from the story on the timeline:

1. We left Liverpool.
2. My sister had visited her friend.
3. I went to collect my sister from her friend's house.
4. They had been crying.
5. I was unpacking.
6. My sister came into my bedroom.

We don't know if this action stopped or continued after it was interrupted.



Function: When do we use them?

1. past narrative tenses

past simple	past continuous	past perfect simple	past perfect continuous
Single or repeated finished events in the past.	Actions in progress or interrupted when another action happened.	Past actions and events that happened before another action in the past.	A continuous action that happened over a period time up to another action in the past.
	With always to express irritation or criticism.		
	For failed plans and unfulfilled expectations.		



Something to consider...

Earlier that day, she had visited her best friend to say goodbye. **They sat and looked at old photos.**

Look at the continuation of this part of the story.



Remember that we also don't use state verbs in the continuous tenses (see Unit 1 for more details on this).

Notice how:

We do not continue talking in the past perfect simple or continuous after the first original sentence because the listener now knows what time period the speaker is referring to.

The story continues in the past simple tense.

When do we use *used to* and *would*?

Function: When do we use them?

2. *used to* and *would*



When I was a teenager, I **used to** rollerblade to school every day.

I remember that! You **used to** have blue hair and we **would** point at you from the bus!



I used to rollerblade every day. Was this a one-time event or an action that was repeated/a habit?

*It was repeated/
a habit.*

I used to rollerblade every day. In this sentence, is this an activity/habit or a situation/state?

*An
activity/habit*



Take notice of when we use *used to* and/or *would* here.

We would point at you. In this sentence, is this an activity/habit or a situation/state?

You used to have blue hair. In this sentence, is this an activity/habit or a situation/state?

*A
situation/state*

*An
activity/habit*

Function: When do we use them?

2. *used to* and *would*

<i>used to</i>	<i>would</i>
For past habits or activities I used to rollerblade to school every day.	For past habits or activities We would point at you from the bus!
For past situations or states You used to have blue hair.	

Notice how we can only use *used to* for states and situations. E.g.

State: She used to have a Ferrari.

Situation: She used to live in New York.



When referring to the past, we can only use *would* with habits and activities. We CANNOT say, for example, *When I was a child, I would live in New York*, as this is a situation, not an activity.

How do we form the present tenses?

Form: How do we make these structures?

Look at the example for the past simple. Work out the breakdown of form for the other three tenses.



past simple	past continuous	past perfect simple	past perfect continuous
+ Subject + verb in past simple	+ Subject + was/were + verb -ing	+ Subject + had + past participle	+ Subject + had + been + verb -ing
- Subject + did + not + verb bare infinitive	- Subject + was/were + not + verb -ing	- Subject + had + not + past participle	- Subject + had + not + been + verb -ing
? (Question word) + did + subject + verb bare infinitive	? (Question word) + was/were + subject + verb -ing	? (Question word) + had + subject + past participle	? (Question word) + had + subject + been + verb -ing

In connected speech, /wəz/ becomes /wəz/.

Remember that we commonly use contractions, e.g. didn't, hadn't, wasn't.

In connected speech, this is pronounced /bɪn/, not /bi:n/.

...and *used to* and *would*?

Form: How do we make these structures?



You **used to have** blue hair and we **would point** at you from the bus!

What form of the verb follows *used to* and *would*?



You **used to have blue hair**. Change this into the negative and question form.

*The bare infinitive
(with no 'to').*

*You didn't use to have
blue hair.
Did you use to have
blue hair?*

Form: How do we make these structures?



You **used to have** blue hair and we **would point** at you from the bus!

<i>used to</i>	<i>would</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Subject + used to + bare infinitive- Subject + did not (didn't) + use to + bare infinitive? (Question word) + did + subject + use to + bare infinitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Subject + would + bare infinitive- Subject + would not (wouldn't) + bare infinitive

Notice how this changes in the negative and question form.

We tend not to use *would* in the question form.

We do not stress the *to* in *used to*, so we pronounce it /tə/.



Practice activities

Correct the mistakes and justify your answers.

1. Jimmy ~~would~~ ^{used to} work in a bank when he was younger, but he ~~was getting~~ ^{got} a job as a pilot after he finished university.
2. When I went to Tim's earlier, he was sitting on the sofa watching TV! He ~~was already finishing~~ ^{had already finished} the cake – it was in the oven – and ~~was cleaning~~ ^{had been cleaning} all day.
3. Helena didn't use to like cats, but three years ago, ~~she had bought~~ ^{bought} one.
4. I ~~hoped~~ ^{was hoping} to pass the exam, but I only got 40%. I can't believe it!
5. Jude ~~was dancing~~ ^{had been dancing} for hours when her husband turned up at the party. They went home soon after.
6. While the baby ~~would sleep~~ ^{slept/was sleeping}, I phoned Tina to wish her luck in her exam.