

Used to (do)

A Study this example situation:

a few years ago



these days

Diane doesn't travel much these days.

She prefers to stay at home.

But she **used to travel** a lot.

She **used to go** away two or three times a year.

She **used to travel** a lot = she travelled a lot regularly in the past, but she doesn't do this any more.



B Something **used to** happen = it happened regularly in the past, but no longer happens:

- I **used to play** tennis a lot, but I don't play very often now.
- David **used to spend** a lot of money on clothes. These days he can't afford it.
- 'Do you go to the cinema much?' 'Not now, but I **used to**.' (= I used to go)

We also use **used to** ... for things that were true, but are not true any more:

- This building is now a furniture shop. It **used to be** a cinema.
- I **used to think** Mark was unfriendly, but now I realise he's a very nice person.
- I've started drinking tea recently. I never **used to like** it before.
- Nicole **used to have** very long hair when she was a child.

C 'I **used to** do something' is past. There is no present form. You cannot say 'I use to do'. To talk about the present, use the present simple (I **do**).

Compare:

<i>past</i>	he used to play	we used to live	there used to be
<i>present</i>	he plays	we live	there is

- We **used to live** in a small village, but now we **live** in London.
- There **used to be** four cinemas in the town. Now there **is** only one.

D The normal question form is **did** (you) **use to** ... ?:

- Did you use to eat** a lot of sweets when you were a child?

The negative form is **didn't use to** ... (**used not to** ... is also possible):

- I **didn't use to like** him. (or I **used not to like** him.)

E Compare I **used to do** and I **was doing**:

- I **used to watch** TV a lot. (= I watched TV regularly in the past, but I no longer do this)
- I **was watching** TV when Mike called. (= I was in the middle of watching TV)

F Do not confuse I **used to do** and I **am used to doing** (see Unit 61). The structures and meanings are different:

- I **used to live** alone. (= I lived alone in the past, but I no longer live alone.)
- I **am used to living** alone. (= I live alone, and I don't find it strange or difficult because I've been living alone for some time.)