

How to use would in English sentences

WOULD

Would is a modal auxiliary, which is the will loan. It allows you to express a hypothesis.

The contracted form of would is 'd, and the contracted form of *would not* is *wouldn't*.

⚠ Be careful not to confuse the 'd of would with that of had!

Here are the different uses of Would in English:

1 - Express the conditional with Would

We would use to imagine something that is not real:

- I'd like to go to Paris.
- I would not (= wouldn't) want to go by bus.
- They would buy this car if they had enough money.

2 - Make a prediction

Would is often used with if + preterite, to evoke a possible hypothesis:

- I would do it if you asked me.
- We would live in Osaka if we were Japanese.
- I would be happy if she came.

3 - To be polite

We use *would* to speak politely (it's less direct than saying "I want"):

- I'd like some information about this car.
- I'd like to see the menu, please.

Would is often used in questioning form to ask or propose something politely:

- Would you help me, please?
- Would you like some tea?
- How would you describe him?

4 - Express the refusal with would

In the negative form, would express the refusal:

- I asked him to come, but he wouldn't.
- He wouldn't listen to me.
- The computer wouldn't start.

5 - Express an indirect speech

- Paul said that he would arrive late.

6 - Indicate a past habit with Would

We can use *would* to talk about things that used to happen regularly in the past, about old habits:

- When I was a child I would walk to school every day.
- She would practise two hours a day.

⚠ We can replace *would* by *used to* in this type of sentence:

- She would practise two hours a day. = She **used to** practise two hours a day.

7 - Would have + Past participle

This formula is used to imagine possible or impossible hypotheses in the past:

- We would have preferred to eat pizzas.
- He wouldn't have accepted.
- I would have done it if I had known.

Compare the following sentences:

- I would like to leave quickly.
- I would have liked to leave quickly.

8 - Would Rather

The formula I'd rather (= I would rather) means 'I like (I would like) better', 'I prefer' (I would prefer).

- I'd rather stay here.
- I'd rather not go out tonight.

There is another possible construction:

- I'd rather you stayed here.
- I'd rather he didn't know.

You can also add 'than' to compare:

- I'd rather stay at home tonight than go to the cinema.

⚠ Be careful not to confuse the construction of *I'd rather* with *I'd prefer*:

- I'd rather go there by bus ≠ I'd prefer **to** go there by bus.