

A BRIEF ENGLISH LESSON: NOVEMBER

used to do versus used to doing

The word "USED" - pronounced /ju:st/ - has two meanings.*

1. It is a *verb*, which *only* refers to the past. It is followed by *to + infinitive* and expresses a changed/discontinued habit or state, e.g.:
I **used to have** a dog. (Ich pflegte einen Hund zu haben - i.e. I don't have one now).
I **didn't use to smoke**. (Ich pflegte nicht zu rauchen - i.e. I smoke now).
2. It is an *adjective* (and means the same as "accustomed"). It is followed by *to + ing-form* or *to + a noun* and follows the verbs *be, get, become* etc. It expresses the state of being (un)familiar with something and the process of becoming familiar with something, e.g:
It took me a long time **to get used to getting** up so early. (Ich brauchte lang mich daran zugewöhnen, so früh aufzustehen).
He is not **used to having** a woman as a boss. (Es ist ungewohnt für ihn, eine Frau als Chefin zu haben).

* This is not to be confused with the past tense of the verb *to use* ("I used a knife to open the letter"), which is pronounced /ju:zd/.

Ready to test yourself?

EXERCISE

In the following sentences, fill the gaps with: **1. USED TO (DIDN'T USE TO), BE USED TO or GET USED TO** - in the correct form *and* **2. The verb in brackets** (if there is one) in the correct form.

1. I (LIKE) meat when I was a child, but now I love it.
2. After a long holiday, you have to (WORK) again.
3. He (BE) a bartender. That's why he's so good at mixing drinks.
4. Did it take you a long time (LIVE) in London?.
5. I found her a little eccentric at first but I (WORK) with her now.
6. I wonder what people (DO) in the evenings before television was invented.
7. She comes from South America and such cold weather.

8. She (THINK) Switzerland was the capital of Sweden before she came to Europe.
9. He (BE) very fat: now he' s quite thin.
10. If you work in a big company, you soon reorganisations.
11. When I came to Switzerland, I had to (SHAKE) hands much more often.
12. I (GO) to a lot of parties when I lived in London.

And the answers?

1. I **didn't use to like** meat when I was a child, but now I love it.
2. After a long holiday, you have to **get used to working** again.
3. He **used to be** a bartender. That' s why he' s so good at mixing drinks.
4. Did it take you a long time **to get used to living** in London?.
5. I found her a little eccentric at first but I **am used to working** with her now. (or: I **have got used to working**....)
6. I wonder what people **used to do** in the evenings before television was invented.
7. She comes from South America and **is not used to** such cold weather.
8. She **used to think** Switzerland was the capital of Sweden before she came to Europe.
9. He **used to be** very fat: now he' s quite thin.
10. If you work in a big company, you soon **get used to** reorganisations.
11. When I came to Switzerland, I had to **get used to shaking** hands much more often.
12. I **used to go** to a lot of parties when I lived in London.