



be used to doing & used to do

These two forms are easily confused, both expressions have **used to** in them but they mean different things and it's important to be able to spot the difference in how they are formed with the verb.

Look at the three examples below to see compare the forms with **used to**, **get used to** and **be used to**. Match sentences 1 - 3 with the descriptions a, b & c

1. *I've been in my job for a long time. I'm used to working this way*
 2. *When he was a child, he used to hate mushrooms, but now he loves them.*
 3. *I'm getting used to living in Spain, but I wish I could speak Spanish better.*
- a) A situation in the past that isn't true anymore.
 - b) A situation that someone is accustomed to, that feels normal.
 - c) When someone is adapting to a new situation

It's important to notice the difference between the forms of the verb with "used to":

to be used to doing or **get used to doing** – subject + **be or get** + used to + **verb +ing**

I'm used to working this way *I'm getting used to living in Spain*

This form is used for talking about an action or situation being familiar (**be used to** for a current state), or something you are becoming accustomed to (**get used to** for a developing or changing situation).

used to do – subject + used to + **infinitive verb**

He used to hate mushrooms *We used to live in Brussels*

This form is used for talking about a past action or habit that is not true anymore.

Speaking Practice

Make sentences about yourself using the three forms **get used to**, **be used to** and **used to**, below. Be careful to use the correct form of the verb!

- 🗣️ I'm used to because....
- 🗣️ I'm getting used to but....
- 🗣️ I used to ... but now...

Next, we'll look at these two forms in more detail.

used to do

We say '*used to do*' when talking about **the past**, it can be used instead of the *past simple form* of a verb to talk about a past habit, or something we did that we don't do anymore.

For example, "*I used to smoke*" is the same as saying "I smoked in the past but I don't smoke anymore."

Used to + infinitive verb

I **used to practice** the piano for 5 hours a day when I was a student.

He **used to work** full time, but now he only works two days a week.

She **didn't use to** enjoy thrillers, but now she loves them.

Did you **use to** smoke?

Notice the negative form: **didn't use to** and interrogative form: **did you use to...?**

Speaking Practice

Using the form *used to* for past habits, talk about the following:

- 🗣️ Things you liked when you were younger but don't like now and vice versa
- 🗣️ Bad habits that you or someone you know gave up.
- 🗣️ Things that were different when your parents and/or grandparents were children. Think about:
 - Food
 - School
 - Work
 - Travel
 - Communication
 - Leisure activities

be used to & get used to

'be used to' is an expression which can be used in present and past tenses.

We use the form with 'be' to talk about something we are *accustomed to*, or a situation which is *familiar* or *normal* for us.

'get used to' is also used in the *continuous form* in the *present* and *past tenses* and in the *future simple form* with *will*

We use the form with 'get' to talk about the *process of familiarising* yourself to a new situation or something *becoming normal* that wasn't in the past.

be/get used to + noun phrase

PRESENT: He's used to the heat; he's lived in Calcutta since he was a child.

I'm not getting used to the hot weather, I'm finding it hard to concentrate.

PAST: They were used to the noise; they'd worked in the night club for many years.

You were just getting used to your new job when the company went bankrupt.

FUTURE: You'll get used to life in the city, soon you'll love it!

be used to + verb +ing

PRESENT: We're used to living in a cold climate, we've been living in Alaska for 17 years

PAST: She was used to doing everything herself; she'd lived on her own for so long.

FUTURE: I'm sure I'll get used to working here, but now it feels really different.

Speaking Practice

Think about the following situations that can bring about big changes in people's lives:

- Moving house
- Starting a new school
- A new relationship
- Starting university
- Starting a new job
- Travelling or living abroad
- Discovering a new type of food
- Having children
- Taking up a new hobby
- Starting a business

Using these ideas choose either the form be used to or get used to in the appropriate tense and give your own examples of the following:

- ⊞ A situation which feels normal now but didn't feel normal in the past
- ⊞ A change in situation in the past which felt different
- ⊞ A change in situation in the past that you became accustomed to
- ⊞ A situation in the present which feels strange but you are becoming accustomed to
- ⊞ A recent change in your situation which you think will feel normal in the future

Exercises on all forms with 'used to' from speakspeak.com

Choose the best answer to fill the gap in each of the following.

1. When I started to work here, I needed a lot of help, but now I _____ all the work on my own.
a. am used to doing b. used to do c. get used to doing
2. He _____ several books a month, but he doesn't have time any more.
a. was used to reading b. got used to reading c. used to read
3. We were surprised to see her driving; she _____ when we first met her.
a. didn't use to drive b. got used to driving c. was used to driving
4. Don't worry, it's a simple program to use. You _____ it in no time, I'm sure.
a. used to use b. are used to c. will get used to
5. When I had to commute to work every day I _____ very early.
a. used to getting up b. used to get up
6. I'm afraid I'll never _____ in this place. I simply don't like it and never will.
a. got used to living b. used to live c. get used to living
7. Whenever we came to Coventry we always _____ in the Central Hotel. We loved it.
a. used to stay b. got used to staying
8. When Pete Smith was our office manager, everything _____ well organized. Now it's total chaos.
a. got used to be b. was used to being c. used to be
9. Harry was shocked when he started working here because he _____ doing so much work every day.
a. wasn't used to b. didn't use to
10. At first the employees didn't like the new open-space office, but in the end they _____ it.
a. got used to b. get used to c. are used to