

UNIT 64 Prefer and would rather

a) Prefer to do and prefer doing

You can use 'prefer to do' or 'prefer doing' to say what you prefer in general. 'Prefer to do' is more usual:

- I don't like cities. I prefer to live (or I prefer living) in the country.

Study the difference in structure:

I prefer (doing) something to (doing) something else
but: I prefer to do something rather than (do) something else

- I prefer that coat to the coat you were wearing yesterday.
- Tom prefers driving to travelling by train.

but: Tom prefers to drive rather than travel by train.

- I prefer to live in the country rather than (live) in a city.

b) Would prefer (to do)

Use 'would prefer to do' to say what someone wants to do in a particular situation (not in general):

- 'Would you prefer tea or coffee?' 'Coffee, please.'
- 'Shall we go by train?' 'Well, I'd prefer to go by car.' (not 'going')

Note the structure:

I'd prefer to do something rather than (do) something else

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

c) Would rather (do) = would prefer to do. After would rather we use the infinitive without to.

Compare:

Shall we go by train? { Well, I'd prefer to go by car. Well, I'd rather go by car. (not 'to go')

- 'Would you rather have tea or coffee?' 'Coffee, please.'
- I'm tired. I'd rather not go out this evening, if you don't mind.
- 'Do you want to go out this evening?' 'I'd rather not.'

Note the structure:

I'd rather do something than (do) something else

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

d) Would rather someone did something

When you want someone else to do something, you can say I'd rather you did ... / I'd rather he did ... etc. We use the *past* in this structure but the meaning is present or future, not past.

Compare:

I'd rather cook the dinner now. I'd rather you cooked the dinner now. (not 'I'd rather you cook')

- 'Shall I stay here?' 'Well, I'd rather you came with us.'
- I'd rather you didn't tell anyone what I said.
- 'Do you mind if I smoke?' 'I'd rather you didn't.'

UNIT 64 Exercises

64.1 Make sentences using 'I prefer (something) to (something else)'.

Example: (driving / travelling by train) I prefer driving to travelling by train.

- 1 (Paris / London) I prefer Paris
- 2 (phoning people / writing letters) I prefer
- 3 (going to the cinema / watching films on television)
I

Now rewrite sentences 2 and 3 using the structure 'I prefer to do (something) ...'.

Example: I prefer to drive rather than travel by train.

- 4 (2) I prefer to phone
 - 5 (3) I
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64.2 Answer these questions using 'I'd prefer ... or I'd rather ...'. Use the words in brackets for your answers.

Examples: Shall we walk? (prefer / go by car) I'd prefer to go by car.
Shall we eat now? (rather / eat a bit later) I'd rather eat a bit later.

- 1 Shall we play tennis? (prefer / go for a swim)
- 2 Shall we watch television? (rather / read a book)
- 3 Shall we leave now? (rather / wait for a few minutes)
- 4 Shall we go to a restaurant? (prefer / eat at home)
- 5 Shall we decide now? (rather / think about it for a while)

Now you have to make sentences using 'I'd prefer ... rather than ... or I'd rather ... than ...' (see sections b and c).

Examples: (walk / go by car) I'd rather walk than go by car.
(stay at home / go to the cinema) I'd prefer to stay at home rather than go to the cinema.

- 6 (go for a swim / play tennis) I'd rather
 - 7 (read a book / watch television) I'd prefer
 - 8 (wait for a few minutes / leave now) I'd prefer
 - 9 (eat at home / go to a restaurant) I'd rather
 - 10 (think about it for a while / decide now) I'd prefer
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64.3 Now you have to use 'I'd rather you (did something)'. You are talking to a friend. You say you'll do something but really you want your friend to do it.

Example: I'll cook the dinner if you really want me to but I'd rather you cooked it.

- 1 I'll phone Tom if you really want me to but I'd rather
- 2 I'll do the washing-up if you really want me to but
- 3 I'll go to the bank if you really want me to but
- 4 I'll tell Ann what happened if you really want me to but