

Prefer and would rather

Prefer to do and prefer doing

You can use 'prefer to (do)' or 'prefer -ing' to say what you prefer in general:

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

Study the differences in structure after **prefer**. We say:

	I prefer	something	to	something else.
	I prefer	doing something	to	doing something else.
<i>but</i>	I prefer	to do something	rather than	(do) something else.

- I **prefer** this coat **to** the coat you were wearing yesterday.
- I **prefer** driving **to** travelling by train.
- but* • I **prefer to drive** **rather than** travel by train.
- Ann **prefers to live** in the country **rather than** (live) in a city.

B Would prefer (I'd prefer...)

We use 'would prefer' to say what somebody wants in a particular situation (not in general):

- 'Would you **prefer** tea or coffee?' 'Coffee, please.'

We say 'would prefer to do' (*not* 'doing'):

- 'Shall we go by train?' 'Well, I'd **prefer to go** by car.' (*not* 'I'd prefer going')
- I'd **prefer to stay** at home tonight **rather than** go to the cinema.

C Would rather (I'd rather...)

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

Compare:

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

The negative is 'I'd **rather not** (do something)':

- 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**.'

Study the structure after **would rather**:

I'd rather	do something	than	(do) something else.
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- I'd **rather stay** at home tonight **than go** to the cinema.

D I'd rather you did something

When you want somebody to do something, you can say 'I'd **rather** you **did** something':

- 'Shall I stay here?' 'I'd **rather** you **came** with us.'
- 'Shall I tell them the news?' 'No. I'd **rather** they **didn't** know.'
- Shall I tell them or **would** you **rather** they **didn't** know?

In this structure we use the *past* (came, did etc.), but the meaning is present or future, *not* past.

Compare:

- I'd **rather cook** the dinner now.
- but* • I'd **rather you cooked** the dinner now. (*not* 'I'd rather you cook')

The negative is 'I'd **rather** you **didn't**...':

- I'd **rather** you **didn't tell** anyone what I said.
- 'Do you mind if I smoke?' 'I'd **rather** you **didn't**.'

EXERCISES

3.1 Which do you prefer? Write sentences using 'I prefer (something) to (something else)'. Put the verb into the correct form where necessary.

- 1 (drive / travel by train) ... I prefer driving to travelling by train.
- 2 (tennis / football) I prefer
- 3 (phone people / write letters) I to
- 4 (go to the cinema / watch films on TV)

Now rewrite sentences 3 and 4 using the structure 'I prefer (to do something)...'.

- 5 (1) I prefer to drive rather than travel by train.
- 6 (3) I prefer to
- 7 (4)

3.2 Write sentences using I'd prefer... or I'd rather... + one of the following:

eat at home ~~get a taxi~~ go alone go for a swim listen to some music
stand think about it for a while wait a few minutes ~~wait till later~~

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|---|------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Shall we walk home? | (prefer) | I'd prefer to get a taxi. |
| 2 | Do you want to eat now? | (rather) | I'd rather wait till later. |
| 3 | Shall we watch TV? | (prefer) | |
| 4 | What about a game of tennis? | (rather) | |
| 5 | Shall we leave now? | (rather) | |
| 6 | Do you want to go to a restaurant? | (prefer) | |
| 7 | I think we should decide now? | (rather) | |
| 8 | Would you like to sit down? | (rather) | |
| 9 | Do you want me to come with you? | (prefer) | |

Now write sentences using **than** and **rather than**.

- 10 (get a taxi / walk home) I'd prefer to get a taxi rather than walk home.
- 11 (go for a swim / play tennis) I'd rather
- 12 (wait a few minutes / leave now)
I'd rather
- 13 (eat at home / go to a restaurant)
I'd prefer
- 14 (think about it for a while / decide now)
I'd rather

3.3 Complete the sentences using **would you rather I...**

- 1 Are you going to cook the dinner or would you rather I cooked it?
- 2 Are you going to tell Ann what happened or would you rather
- 3 Are you going to do the shopping or
- 4 Are you going to answer the phone or

3.4 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences.

- 1 'Shall I tell Ann the news?' 'No, I'd rather she ~~didn't~~ know.'
- 2 Do you want me to go now or would you rather I here?
- 3 Do you want to go out this evening or would you rather at home?
- 4 This is a private letter addressed to me. I'd rather you read it.
- 5 It's quite a nice house but I'd rather it a bit bigger.
- 6 'Do you mind if I turn on the radio?' 'I'd rather you I'm trying to study.'