

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...?

VERSION FOR SPANISH, PORTUGUESE, ITALIAN AND
FRENCH NATIVE SPEAKERS

100 LESSONS

THE MOST INCORRECTLY USED
WORDS IN ENGLISH

Dear English Learners,

Firstly, thank you for giving me the opportunity to help you improve your English. I am delighted to have the privilege of being your teacher, and I hope that my book can give you a better understanding of English, as well as answering some of your questions and correcting some of your common mistakes.

As you may have read on my website, I started writing my first English learning book in 2012. At that time, it was just one book that included many different types of lessons, and since then I've divided it into three groups as part of my grammar series: "Grammar Essentials", "What's the Difference Between...?", and "Stop Saying That!" While you are reading some of the lessons in this book, you may see references to these other books, so if you have these other books too, you can quickly and easily find the information you need to learn more about a specific topic.

Since 2012, I have been adapting and improving these books based on the mistakes that I hear most often in the classroom and the questions that I receive most often from students in order to try and produce a book that can best meet your English needs even if I have never met you!

It's important to note that English is constantly evolving, and many versions of English exist all over the world. It's possible that in some cases, the type of language or grammar that is used in England can be different than the type of English that is used in United States, for example. This book has been written from an American/Canadian English perspective, which is the English in American movies, pop songs, and media. Studies have shown that American English has become more common internationally than British English, so the lessons in this book should be useful in your future English interactions with people all over the world.

I hope that you enjoy this book and that it can help you achieve your goal of improving your English so that you can confidently and correctly communicate with the world.

Sincerely,



Blake Howe
Accelerate English

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Even/Even though/Even if

Common Mistakes

- *“Even if I’m sick, I still go to school.”*
- *“Even if though I studied hard last night for the test today, I failed it.”*

Even

The word “even” is used to emphasize that you are going to say something surprising or unexpected. One common mistake related to “even” is that students think it’s used alone to connect two clauses. However, because “even” is an adverb, and not a conjunction, it cannot connect two clauses together by itself. The word “even” alone can describe only one clause. If you want to use it to describe the relationship between two clauses, you need a conjunction with it, such as “if” (“even if”) or “though” (“even though”).

In the examples below, the adverb “even” is being used alone to describe only one clause. A clause is a subject (noun) and a base form verb. The clauses are underlined:

- *All my classmates came to our class party. Even my teacher came! – “my teacher” is surprising information*
- *I passed all parts of my test. I even passed the listening test. – I’m not good at listening, so this was surprising*
- *She knows a lot of languages. She even knows how to speak Chinese. – her Chinese ability is surprising*

Common Use: telling a surprising fact (with only one clause or noun): *“even my grandparents were dancing.”*

Even Though

It’s important to know that “though” is a similar word to “but”, because both “but” and “though” connect two clauses that are contrasting or opposites. However, “though” can be at the beginning of the two clauses that it connects, while “but” can only be in the middle of the two clauses. Instead of putting “but” in the middle of two clauses, we can put “though” at the beginning:

- *We played better than the other team, but we lost the game.
Though we played better than the other team, we lost the game.*
- *I like science fiction movies, but I didn’t like Lord of the Rings.
Though I like science fiction movies, I didn’t like Lord of the Rings.*

You can see from the two examples above, “though” is being used to connect two clauses, but it’s used at the beginning. In both examples, the two clauses are contrasting, or opposite: “playing better” is good, but “losing” is bad, and “liking science-fiction movies” is positive, but “didn’t like Lord of the Rings” is negative.

When you combine “even” and “though” you can connect two clauses (because of “though”) and emphasize that the relationship between the two clauses is very surprising or unexpected (because of “even”).

The subject and verb of each clause below are underlined to show you that there are two clauses being connected by “even though”:

- *Even though we live together, we never see each other. – the clauses “live together” and “never see each other” is a contrast and a surprising relationship because you expect to see the people who you live with*
- *Even though I have many friends, I feel lonely. – the clauses “I have many friends” and “I feel lonely” are contrasting and surprising*

The phrase “even though” can be put in the middle of the two clauses, but if the two events happen at different times, “even though” needs to connect to the clause that happens first in time-order.

- *The company fired her, even though she was their best employee. – the clauses “the company fired her” and “she was the best employee” are surprising opposites (“she was their best employee” happened first in time-order)*

Common Use: connecting a surprising result to a true situation: *“even though he had never gone ice skating before, he was really good at it.”*

Even If

In this situation, the adverb “even” is being added to the conjunction “if”. As you know, the conjunction “if” can be used for a variety of conditional situations. You can add “even” to “if” in a conditional when the two clauses in the conditional have a surprising or unexpected relationship:

- *If I won the lottery, I would quit my job.* – this is a 2nd conditional for an imaginary/unexpected situation; this relationship between the two clauses is normal because people usually quit their job when they win the lottery
- *Even if I won the lottery, I would keep my job.* – this is a surprising relationship between the two clauses because keeping your job after winning the lottery is unexpected
- *She gets angry easily if she has a lot of stress.* – this is a zero conditional for basic facts and routine behaviours; the relationship between the two clauses is not surprising, because it’s logical that people get angry when they have stress
- *She is always cheerful, even if she has a lot of stress.* – this is a surprising relationship between the two clauses; being cheerful when you have a lot of stress is unexpected and surprising

You have to be careful about the difference between “even if” and “even though” because “even if” is related to conditionals, which are usually more hypothetical situations. However, on the other hand, “even though” is used with confirmed true situations in the same way as “but”. Think about the difference between these two sentences below and how a mistake could cause problems in your communication:

- a) *Even if I lied to you...* – this is a 2nd conditional; it’s only imagining lying to you in the future (it’s not a real situation)
- b) *Even though I lied to you...* – this is saying that I already lied to you; it has the same meaning as *“I lied to you, but...”*

In the first example above, you are creating an imaginary hypothetical situation like *“If people had wings”, “If dogs could talk”* or *“If I went to jail”*. 2nd conditionals can imagine things that are unlikely or impossible.

In the second example above, there is no “if” which means it is not a conditional. It is describing a real confirmed situation. It is like saying: *“people have wings, but...”, “dogs can talk, but...”, “I went to jail, but...”*.

It’s important to recognize that factual, confirmed situations should use “though”, while hypothetical or possible situations should use “if”:

- *Even though the moon is very far away, humans have been there.* – it is confirmed that the moon is very far
- *Even if I become rich, I won’t spend most of my money.* – becoming rich is a possibility but not a confirmed truth

Common Use: emphasizing a surprising result in a hypothetical or imaginary situation: *“even if I was married, I wouldn’t want to have kids.”* (I’m not married in this case)

To learn more about conjunctions, see Lesson #21 in “Grammar Essentials”

Key Points

- Use “even” to emphasize something that is surprising or unexpected
- Use only “even” with one clause but not as a conjunction to connect two clauses
- Use “even if” and “even though” to connect two clauses that have an unusual or surprising relationship
- Use “even if” to make a conditional
- Use “even though” for real confirmed situations like “but”, except “even though” can be at the beginning of the two clauses and “even though” emphasizes a contrast more strongly than “but”

Choose the Correct Answer

1. (*Even/Even if/Even though*) he’s 60 years old, he still runs marathons.
2. (*Even/Even if/Even though*) I could find out when I will die, I wouldn’t want to know.

- 3. *(Even/Even if/Even though)* I reminded her to take her medicine five times, she still forgot.
- 4. I never hug any of my family members, *(even/even if/even though)* my mother.
- 5. You can't miss the test next week. You have to write it *(even/even if/even though)* you get sick.
- 6. When I was traveling, I missed everything about my country, *(even/even if/even though)* the cold weather.

What's the Difference?

- a) Even though you'll fail the final exam, you won't fail the course.
- b) Even if you fail the final exam, you won't fail the course.

- a) Even though you are vegetarian, you can eat this burger, because it's not real meat.
- b) Even if you are vegetarian, you can eat this burger, because it's not real meat.
- c) People love our burger, even vegetarians! Because it's not real meat.

Practice It

Write examples by using the words from this lesson (or use the practice section at the end of this book for ideas)

Usually do/Used to do/Be used to doing

Common Mistakes

- *"People in my country ~~use to~~ usually shake hands when they meet."*
- *"I don't mind doing presentations. I'm used to ~~speak~~ speaking in front of people, so I won't be nervous."*

Usually do

The word "usually" is an adverb that describes routine actions or behaviours that are normal and common. It is connected to a base form verb, either present simple: *"Nowadays, I usually eat cereal for breakfast"* or past simple: *"In high school, I usually ate cereal for breakfast"*.

Use "usually" when you want to describe what your regular routine is:

- *I usually go to the gym on the weekend.* – this is part of my normal routine behaviour
- *She usually comes to our coffee shop around 7:30 in the morning.* – this is part of her regular routine
- *The trains usually leave on time.* – this is a common situation

Common Use: describing routine behaviours: *"I usually walk to work."*

Used to do

The expression "used to do" tells us that something was true in the past but is not true anymore. When the verb "use" connects with an infinitive verb ("to do"), it can *only* be in the past tense ("used") because this expression only describes the past.

The combination of "use" with an infinitive verb *cannot* describe the present. If you want to describe a common situation in the present, use the adverb "usually", and if you want to describe something in the past that isn't true now, "used" is possible:

- *I ~~use to~~ usually arrive at my office at 8 in the morning.* – this is still true now
- *I used to arrive at my office at 8 in the morning, but now I arrive at 9.* – arriving at 8 is not true anymore

As mentioned earlier, the verb "use" can be changed to past tense ("used") to talk about the past. We connect this past tense verb with another verb in the infinitive form ("to do"). The grammar form is the same as when we connect infinitive verbs to verbs like "want", "decide" and "plan":

- *I wanted to stay home but I went.* *Did you want to....?*
- *I decided to leave early.* *Did you decide to...?*
- *I planned to meet my friends yesterday.* *Did you plan to....?*
- *I used to work in Colombia (but I don't now).* *Did you use to....?*

Note that the present form ("use") appears in the question above (*"Did you use to?"*) because the past tense verb "did" is first, and it establishes the whole question as a past simple question.

- *I used to watch cartoons every morning.* – when I was a child
- *She used to live with her parents.* – but she lives alone now
- *He used to be shy.* – but now he's very confident

Common Use: remembering the past and telling stories about routine past behaviours: *"my brother and I used to play soccer in this field when we were kids."*

Be Used to doing

Although “be used to doing” looks very similar to “used to do”, there are differences in the grammar and the meaning of these two phrases. The difference is related to the words “used” and “to”.

In the expression below, the word “used” is a past participle adjective, and it relates to a feeling. It is similar to the adjective “familiar”, which is also a feeling:

- *She is familiar with it. → She is used to it.*

The word “used” always has “d” on the end, because past participle adjectives only have one form. You can change the tense of the “be” verb, but “used” doesn’t change:

- *I am used to it. → I was used to it.*

We use “be” with “used” because we use “be” with past participle adjectives to describe the subject:

- *I am tired. → I am used to it.*

Use “be” in questions because you are asking about a past participle adjective:

- *Are you bored? → Are you used to it?*

We can use “get” with “used” to describe a change in the subject from not having the adjective state to having the adjective state:

- *I am getting sick. / I got sick. → I am getting used to it. / I got used to it.*

The word “to” in “be used to” is a preposition, like “go to school”, not part of an infinitive verb. When you connect a verb word to a preposition, it must be in gerund (-ing) form. Therefore, if you use a verb with “be used to”, it needs to be a gerund form because of the preposition “to”:

- *I am tired of waiting. → I am used to waking up early.*

When you make a past participle or adjective negative, you add “not” to the word, so the same is true with the adjective “used”. If you’ve never done something before, you can say: “I’m not used to it” because it’s unfamiliar to you:

- *I’m not angry. → I am not used to it.*

The examples below combine these points into examples:

- *When I arrived here, I was not used to wearing winter clothes, but I’m getting used to it.* – my country doesn’t have winter, so when I arrived here, I was not familiar with winter clothes but I’m becoming more familiar with them
- *I’m not used to using chopsticks. I’m used to using a fork and knife.* – using a fork and knife are familiar to me but chopsticks are not
- *Driving on the left side of the road in the U.K. was difficult because I’m used to driving on the right side.* – driving on the right side is comfortable/familiar, but not the left side

Common Use: telling people why you are not comfortable with something: “I’m not used to it.”

You can use both “usually” and “be used to” to describe something in present form, but the message is different. Only use “be used to” when you want to emphasize your feeling toward something. If your goal is to only express common situations or routine actions, use “usually”.

For example, if you want to tell someone that you go to the gym after work on most days, just say “I usually go to the gym after work”, because you don’t need to describe this fact with any feeling, so “be used to” is not appropriate in this case.

- *I usually cook my own dinner.* – this focuses on the fact that this is routine or common for me
- *I am used to cooking my own dinner.* – this focuses on the fact that cooking my own dinner is not uncomfortable for me

To learn more about using prepositions like “to” with gerunds, read Lesson #17 “Grammar Essentials” and to learn more about verbs that connect with infinitive verbs, read Lesson #27 in “Grammar Essentials”

Key Points

- Use “used to (do)” to describe things that were true in the past and not anymore
- Use “usually do” for common situations and behaviours
- Use “be used to doing” to emphasize familiarity with something

Choose the Correct Answer

1. I (*used to/usually*) be bad at managing my money, but now I’m saving it.
2. I (*am used to/usually*) have a cup of coffee in the morning before I go to work.
3. I (*used to/am used to*) work for a big telecommunications company, but I quit last year.
4. I (*usually/am used to*) wearing a uniform because every job that I have had required me to wear one.
5. Employees (*usually/are used to*) arrive around 8am and leave around 5pm.
6. He (*didn’t used to/isn’t used to*) humid weather so he’s always uncomfortable here.
7. My grandfather (*used to/is used to*) tell me stories about his days in the war.
8. (*Did you/Are you*) used to speaking in front of people? You looked very relaxed during your presentation!
9. I got drunk easily. I (*didn’t/am not*) used to drinking alcohol.
10. Where do you (*usually/used to*) park your car? I (*used to park/was used to parking*) mine in the parking lot across the street but nowadays that lot is always full.

What’s the Difference?

- a) My boss is used to making all of the difficult decisions.
 - b) My boss usually makes all of the difficult decisions.
 - c) My boss used to make all of the difficult decisions.
-
- a) I usually wear glasses.
 - b) I used to wear glasses.
 - c) I am used to wearing glasses.
 - d) I am not used to wearing glasses.
 - e) I am getting used to wearing glasses.
 - f) I got used to wearing glasses.

Practice It

Write examples by using the words from this lesson (or use the practice section at the end of this book for ideas)
