**How to use 'would'**

**subject + would + infinitive** (I would go) or **subject + would + have + past participle** (I would have gone).  
  
'Would' has quite a lot of different uses. It's often a kind of past tense version of 'will'.  
  
Remember that both 'had' and 'would' can be shorted to **'d**. But only 'would' is followed by an infinitive without 'to'. 'Had' is followed by a past participle or by 'to + infinitive'.  
  
**1: The past of 'will' in reported speech**  
  
When we use 'will' in direct speech, we often use 'would' to change it into reported speech.

* Direct speech: I **will be** there at 6pm.
* Reported speech: She said that she **would be** there at 6pm.
* Direct speech: We **won't see** you at the party.
* Reported speech: They said that they **wouldn't see** us at the party.

[**Read more about reported speech here.**](https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/reported-speech.html)  
  
**2: Willingness in the past**  
  
In the present we use 'will' to talk about willingness (willingness means that you are happy to do something). For example, if we say 'I will help you', this means 'I'm offering to help you' or 'I'm happy to help you'. We use 'would' for the same meaning in the past. Usually, we use this in the negative (when we are not happy to do something) and we use 'won't' for the present and 'wouldn't for the past'.

* His mother **won't let** him go to the party.
* His mother **wouldn't let** him go to the party.

**3: Habits in the past**

* When we were children, we would go to the beach every summer.
* When I lived in Japan, I would take Japanese lessons three times a week.

This is similar in meaning to 'used to + infinitive'. [**Read more about habits in the past here.**](https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/used-to.html)  
  
(We can also use 'will' for typical behaviour or habits in the present, though this is much less common than using 'would' for the past. An example in the present is 'she'll talk and talk for hours!')

**4: Requests**  
  
We use both 'will' and 'would' to make requests. The meaning is the same for both, but a request with 'would' is more polite than a request with 'will'.

* Will you please help me?
* Would you please help me?

**5: The second conditional**  
  
We use 'would + infinitive' in the second conditional.

* If I had enough money, I would travel around the world.
* If we lived in Madrid, we would study Spanish.

[**Read more about the second conditional here.**](https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/second-conditional.html)  
  
**6: The third conditional**  
  
We use 'would + have + past participle' in the third conditional.

* If I had gone to bed earlier, I wouldn't have been so tired.
* If the train hadn't been late, we would have arrived on time.

[**Read more about the third conditional here.**](https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/third-conditional.html)  
[**Read about 'could have' / 'would have' / 'should have' here.**](https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/could-have-should-have-would-have.html)  
  
**7: With 'wish'**

* I wish that he wouldn't smoke so much.
* I wish you would come to see me more often.

[**See more about 'wish' here.**](https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/wish.html)  
  
**8: With set phrases to talk about what we want**  
  
**9: Would rather** expresses choice or preference.

* She **would rather** die than marry him.
* I **would rather** read a novel than watch that absurd movie.

**10: Polite questions**  
**Would** is used for asking polite questions.

* **Would** you open the window? (This is more polite than ‘Will you open the window?’)
* Would you, please, call me a taxi?

**11: We use 'would'** with some set phrases. These have some 'willingness' meaning in them.

* I would like some coffee.
* She would rather go to the cinema.
* We would prefer to leave immediately.
* Would you mind helping me?

## ‘**Should’ can be used:**

1. **To express something that is probable**  
   Examples:  
   “John should be here by 2:00 PM.”  
   “He should be bringing Jennifer with him.
2. **To ask questions**  
   Examples:  
   “Should we turn left at this street?”  
   “Shouldn’t you be getting ready for work?”
3. **To show obligation, give recommendation or even an opinion**  
   Examples:  
   “You should stop eating fast food.”  
   “You should go for walks more often.”  
   “We should go to the park tomorrow.”  
   “He should go to the pharmacy first thing in the morning.”

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## **‘Would’ can be used:**

1. **To ask ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘why’ or ‘how’ (not always, but often)**Examples:  
   “How would you do that?”  
   “What would you do if…”  
   “When would we have time to do that?”  
   “Who would want to wait in that line?”
2. **To make a polite request**Examples:  
   “Would you like any tea?”  
   “Would you like anything else?”
3. **In hypothetical situations**  
   Examples:  
   “If I had a lot of money I would like to own a farm one day.”  
   “I would love to buy a boat one day.”
4. **To ask questions**Examples:  
   “Would you like fries or salad?”  
   “Would you like to join us tonight?”

## **‘Could’ can be used:**

1. **To suggest a possibility**  
   Examples:  
   “Whose journal is this? It could be Nelly’s journal.”  
   “Could ‘A’ be the answer? It’s definitely not ‘B’ or ‘D.’”
2. **To make a polite request**  
   Examples:  
   “Could you please move this box?”  
   “Could you please pass that paper?”  
   Using the word ‘could’ to respond to the requests we made in the last example would suggest that you *could* do it, but you might not really want to. If you agree to the request, then you use the word ‘can’.  
   Examples:  
   “Could you please move this box?” “I could, but I am really busy right now.”  
   “Could you please pass that paper.” “Sure, I can.”