

Prefer and would rather

A 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

58.1 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)

58.2 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~~

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

58.3 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

58.4 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.'

UNIT 58

58.1

- 2 I prefer tennis to football. *or*
...football to tennis.
- 3 I prefer phoning people to writing
letters. *or* ...writing letters to
phoning people.
- 4 I prefer going to the cinema to
watching films on TV. *or*
...watching films on TV to going
to the cinema.
- 6 I prefer to phone people rather
than write letters. *or* ...to write
letters rather than phone people.
- 7 I prefer to go to the cinema rather
than watch films on TV. *or*
...to watch films on TV rather
than go to the cinema.

58.2

- 3 I'd prefer to listen to some music.
- 4 I'd rather go for a swim.
- 5 I'd rather wait a few minutes.
- 6 I'd prefer to eat at home.
- 7 I'd rather think about it for a
while.
- 8 I'd rather stand.
- 9 I'd prefer to go alone.
- 11 I'd rather go for a swim than play
tennis.
- 12 I'd rather wait a few minutes
than leave now.
- 13 I'd prefer to eat at home rather
than go to a restaurant.
- 14 I'd rather think about it for a
while than decide now.

58.3

- 2 I told her
- 3 would you rather I did it
- 4 would you rather I answered it

58.4

- | | |
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| 2 stayed | 5 was |
| 3 stay | 6 didn't |
| 4 didn't | |