



PUC SPEL Online is a web-based English language tutoring system developed by PUC to help you improve your English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. You can access the online courses from your own computer with an internet connection and at any time you are available. The course provides convenience and flexibility for you to practice your English independently outside of your classrooms with the support of online tutors.

Grammar Reference

a. Subject and object questions

Object questions

When a *Wh-question word* is the object of the question, use the normal question word order. Most questions in English are **object questions** – we want to know about *the receiver of the action*. For questions in the simple present, the auxiliary verbs are **do** and **does**:

Form: Question words + auxiliary + subject + verb

Example:

What do you *want* to drink?

Who does Karen *like*?

What does smoking *cause*?

For questions in the simple past, the auxiliary verb is **did**:

Example:

What did Vichet *make*?

What did the earthquake *damage*?

Who did Theory *lie* to?

Subject questions

However, sometimes we want to ask about the **subject**. We don't know the person or thing who performed the action, and we want to find out. This type of question is called a **subject question**, and subject questions do NOT use the auxiliary verbs **do**, **does**, and **did**.

Form: Who / What + verb + object?

Example:

Who wants some fruit juice? Not: ~~Who does want~~ some fruit juice?

Who likes oranges? Not: ~~Who does like~~ oranges?

What happened? Not: ~~What did happen?~~

Note:

If you're asking about the **doer/subject**, then don't use do/does/did:

Examples:

~~Who **does** want fruit juice?~~ Who wants fruit juice?

~~What **did** damage your house?~~ What damaged your house?

If you're asking about the **receiver/object**, then use do/does/did:

Examples:

What **do** you want to drink?

What **did** the earthquake damage?

b. Used to and would

Form:

Affirmative: used to + infinitive
Negative: didn't use to + infinitive
Question: did + subject + use to

There is no **d** in the spelling of **use to** in negatives and questions.

Example: Did you **use to go** swimming when you were at school?
I didn't **use to like** action films, but I love them now.

We use "**used to**" to talk about **past habits** and **states** which are no longer true. Use **would** to talk about past habits only.

Example: I **used to / would take** exercise every day.
(Past habit)
She used to **like** spinach. Not: ~~She would like~~ spinach. (State)

We use the ***simple past***, not ***used to***, to describe how long something lasted.

Example: My sister ***studied*** English for six years.

Not: ~~My sister used to study English for six years.~~

We use the ***simple past***, not ***used to/would***, to talk about a single event in the past.

Example: She ***broke*** her brother's computer.

Not: ~~She used to break her brother's computer.~~

c. Modals of ability, past, and present

We use ***can + verb*** to describe general ability in the present.

Example: She ***can speak*** several languages.

One of my classmates ***can learn*** many things from books.

They ***can't dance*** very well.

We use ***could + verb*** to describe general ability in the past.

Example: She ***could paint*** before she started school.

I ***could play*** the guitar when I was seven years old.

They ***could write*** poem very well.

We use ***was / were able to*** talk about general ability in the past or a particular situation in the past.

Example: The burglar ***was able to get in*** through the bathroom window.

The police ***weren't able to catch*** the speeding car.

The speaker ***wasn't able to attend*** the conference due to illness.

To emphasize that the action is difficult, we use ***manage to*** in the present or past.

Example: I usually ***manage to visit*** my parents every year.

The bird *managed to escape* from its cage and fly away.

In the negative, we use *couldn't*, *wasn't able to*, and *didn't manage to* for one particular moment.

Example: I *couldn't cook* until I went to university.

She *wasn't able to* purchase the tickets for the concert.

I *didn't manage* to buy book the flight tickets for my friends.