

USED TO and BE USED TO

(I used to do *and* I am used to doing)

 Look at these sentences :

- A.
1. He used to smoke; now he doesn't.
 2. They used to live in small huts; now they live in houses made of concrete.
 3. That man used to suffer from rheumatism; he is in perfect health now.
- B.
1. I am used to the noise of the children. (i.e. Their noise does not bother me.)
 2. Some people are used to sleeping with the light on. (They are accustomed to that; the light does not disturb their sleep.)
 3. He is not the sort of person to eat Chinese food; he is not used to it. (i.e. He has not grown accustomed to Chinese food.)

In Group A, "*He used to smoke*" means that he was in the habit of smoking, but he has given it up now: he smoked in the past, but he does not do that any longer. Again, "*They used to live in small huts*" means that they did so only in the past; but they do not live in huts any longer. And so on for "*He used to suffer from rheumatism.*" The form "USED TO + INFINITIVE" therefore describes a past habit that holds no more for the present.

In Group B, on the other hand, "*I am used to the noise*" means "I am accustomed to the noise"; "*they are used to sleeping with the light on*" means "They are accustomed to sleeping with the light on"; and "*he is not used to Chinese food*" means "he is not accustomed to it." In other words, the form BE USED TO, followed by a NOUN, PRONOUN, or GERUND (i.e. **-ing** form) means BE ACCUSTOMED TO something. Compare the following sentences:

1. He used to drive.
2. He is used to driving in heavy traffic.

Here the first sentence means that he does not drive any more. The second sentence has another meaning: Driving in heavy traffic does not bother him at all -- because he is accustomed to it. Hence students should not confuse USED TO + INFINITIVE with BE USED TO + NOUN/PRONOUN/GERUND.

Exercise 22

Choose the correct form of USED TO to complete each of the following sentences:

1. Santos (used to be -- is used to being) a Christian. Now he has embraced Islam.
2. Worshippers (used to turn -- are used to turning) their faces in prayer to the Holy Mosque in Jerusalem; but Muslims do not do that any more.

3. My father cannot go to sleep in a hotel that is located in a busy street. He (did not use to -- is not used to) the noise.
4. I (did not use to live -- am not used to living) with a smoker. The smoke bothers me a lot.
5. He (used to stand-- is used to standing) in queues. I wonder why he doesn't do that now.
6. He (used to stand--is used to standing) in queues. Waiting in a queue does not bother him at all.
7. We (used to fast -- are used to fasting) every Monday and Thursday. In fact, we have grown accustomed to that.
8. They (used to fast -- are used to fasting) every Monday and Thursday. Now that they are in poor health, they don't observe fasting beyond the month of Ramadan.
9. People who live in the tropical zone (used to -- are used to) excessive heat.
10. The people there (used to -- are used to) hunger, thirst, cold, and other forms of hardship and adversity.