

Grammar worksheet + exercise: would rather, would prefer, prefer

Specific preferences: *would prefer, would rather*

When we speak about a specific preference (our preference now), **would rather** and **would prefer** have the same meaning and are interchangeable.

Would rather can be abbreviated to **'d rather**.

Would prefer can be abbreviated to **'d prefer**:

- *We went to the theatre yesterday; today I **would rather** go to the cinema.*
- *We went to the theatre yesterday; today I **would prefer** to go to the cinema.*
- *... **'d rather** go to the cinema.*
- *... **'d prefer** to go to the cinema.*

Would rather is followed by the **infinitive without to**.

Would prefer is followed by **to + infinitive** or a noun:

- *I'd rather **have** fruit juice.*
- *I'd prefer **to have** fruit juice.*
- *I'd prefer fruit juice. (noun, no verb)*

We say **would rather . . . than**.

We say **would prefer . . . rather than** or **would prefer . . . instead of**:

- *It's such nice weather – I'd **rather** sit in the garden **than** watch TV.*
- *It's such nice weather – I'd **prefer** to sit in the garden **rather than** watch TV.*
- *It's such nice weather – I'd **prefer** to sit in the garden **instead of** watching TV.*

We use a **past tense after would rather** when we speak about the actions of other people, even though that action may be in the present or future:

- *I'd rather **you took** a taxi (instead of walking) – it's not safe on the streets at night.*
- *The film is quite violent. I'd rather our children **didn't watch** it.*



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General preferences: *prefer, would rather*

When we talk about general preferences, we can use **prefer** or **would rather** (but not ~~would prefer~~). **Prefer** and **would rather** have the same meaning:

- *I **prefer** walking to cycling.*
- *I **would rather** walk than cycle.*

After **prefer** we use the verb in the **-ing** form. After **would rather** we use the **infinitive without to**:

- *I **prefer using** a keyboard to writing with a pen.*
- *I'd **rather use** a keyboard than write with a pen. (I'd = I would)*

We say **prefer . . . to**, but **would rather . . . than**:

- *I **prefer walking to** driving.*
- *I'd **rather walk than** drive.*



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Exercise instructions

Choose the best answer to fill the gap in each of the following:

1. I prefer coffee _____ tea.
a. to b. than c. from
2. I don't fancy the theatre again. I'd rather _____ to the cinema.
a. to b. go c. going
3. Although I love relaxing on beaches, I think I prefer _____ in the mountains.
a. walk b. walking
4. I'd rather speak to him in person _____ things over the phone.
a. than discuss b. to discussing c. to discuss
5. I prefer trains _____ cars.
a. from b. than c. to
6. I'm not a big fan of cars; I prefer _____ by train.
a. travelling b. travel
7. If I had a choice I think I'd rather _____ London.
a. live in Paris than in b. live in Paris to c. to live in Paris than
8. They'd rather have lunch inside, but I'd prefer _____ outside in the garden.
a. eat b. eating c. to eat

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Key

1. I prefer coffee **to** tea. (a.)
2. I don't fancy the theatre again. I'd rather **go** to the cinema. (b.)
3. Although I love relaxing on beaches, I think I prefer **walking** in the mountains. (b.)
4. I'd rather speak to him in person **than discuss** things over the phone. (a.)
5. I prefer trains **to** cars. (c.)
6. I'm not a big fan of cars; I prefer **travelling** by train. (a.)
7. If I had a choice I think I'd rather **live in Paris than in** London. (a.)
8. They'd rather have lunch inside, but I'd prefer **to eat** outside in the garden. (c.)

Online version of this exercise: <https://goo.gl/bsNddT>

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