

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 traveling by train.
- but* I prefer to drive rather than travel by train.
- Ann prefers to live in the country rather than in a city. *or* ... 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):

- "Should we take the train?" "No, I'd prefer to drive." (*not* I'd prefer driving)
- I'd prefer to stay home tonight rather than go to the movies.

C

Would rather (I'd rather)

We use **would rather + base form** (do/have/stay, etc.). Compare:

- "Should we take the train?" { "I'd prefer to drive."
"I'd rather drive." (*not* to drive)
- "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 tonight, if you don't mind.
- "Do you want to go out tonight?" "I'd rather not."

We say "would rather do something than do something else":

- I'd rather stay home than go to the movies.

D

I'd rather you did something

We say "I'd rather you did something" (*not* I'd rather you do). For example:

- "I'll fix the car tomorrow, OK?" "I'd rather you did it today." (= I'd prefer this)
- "Is it OK if Ben stays here?" "I'd rather he came with us." (*not* he comes)
- Should I tell them the news, or would you rather they didn't know? (*not* don't know)

In this structure we use the *past* (did/come, etc.), but the meaning is not past. Compare:

- I'd rather make dinner now.

but I'd rather you made dinner now. (*not* I'd rather you make).

I'd rather you didn't (do something) = I'd prefer that you not do it:

- I'd rather you didn't tell anyone what I said.
- "Should I tell Stephanie?" "I'd rather you didn't."

Exercises

56.1 Which do you prefer? Write sentences using *I prefer* (something) to (something else). Put the verb into the correct form where necessary.

- (drive / travel by train) *I prefer driving to traveling by train.*
- (tennis / soccer) I prefer _____.
- (call people / write letters) I _____ to _____.
- (go to the movies / watch videos at home)

Now rewrite sentences 3 and 4 using the structure *I prefer* (to do something) rather than (something else).

- (1) *I prefer to drive rather than travel by train.*
- (3) I prefer to _____.
- (4) _____.

56.2 Write sentences using *I'd prefer ... or I'd rather ...* + one of the following:

eat at home ~~take a taxi~~ go alone go for a swim listen to some music stand
think about it for a while ~~wait till later~~

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Shall we walk home? | (prefer) <i>I'd prefer to take a taxi.</i> |
| 2. Do you want to eat now? | (rather) <i>I'd rather wait till later.</i> |
| 3. Would you like to watch TV? | (prefer) _____ |
| 4. What about a game of tennis? | (rather) _____ |
| 5. Do you want to go to a restaurant? | (prefer) _____ |
| 6. I think we should decide now. | (rather) _____ |
| 7. Would you like to sit down? | (rather) _____ |
| 8. Do you want me to come with you? | (prefer) _____ |

Now write sentences using *than* or *rather than*.

- (take a taxi / walk home)
I'd prefer *to take a taxi rather than walk home*.
- (go for a swim / play tennis)
I'd rather _____.
- (eat at home / go to a restaurant)
I'd prefer _____.
- (think about it for a while / decide now)
I'd rather _____.

56.3 Complete the sentences using *would you rather I ... ?*

- Are you going to make dinner, or *would you rather I made it* _____?
- Are you going to tell Ann what happened, or would you rather _____?
- Are you going to do the shopping, or _____?
- Are you going to answer the phone, or _____?

56.4 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences.

- "Should I tell Ann the news?" "No, I'd rather she *didn't* _____ know."
- Do you want me to go now, or would you rather I _____ here?
- Do you want to go out tonight, or would you rather _____ home?
- This is a private letter addressed to me. I'd rather you _____ read it.
- I don't really like these shoes. I'd rather they _____ a different color.
- "Do you mind if I turn on the radio?" "I'd rather you _____ . I'm trying to study."