



# Learn English Through Stories

T Series

Upper - Intermediate

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## **Banta Learning Past Tenses 4 by K S Sandhu**

### **The Boy from the Dolomites**

Reinhold Messner is often called the greatest mountain climber of all time. He was the first person to climb all fourteen peaks over 8,000 metres — and he did it without supplementary oxygen.

Messner was born in 1944 in a small village near Bolzano, Italy. This area used to belong to the Austrian Empire, and people there still speak German. When Reinhold was a child, his father would take him and his brothers climbing in the rugged Dolomite Mountains every weekend. At the age of five, he already reached his first high summit — a 3,000-metre peak. By thirteen, he would attempt difficult rock faces with his younger brother Günther. The mountains used to be their playground, and climbing became part of their daily life. They didn't use to worry about danger; they just loved the challenge.

As a young man, Messner developed his own style. In the 1970s, most climbers used to rely on heavy equipment, large teams, and extra oxygen. Messner would refuse all that. He would climb with only light gear, no outside support, and no bottled oxygen — even at extreme altitude. People thought it was impossible, but he proved them wrong. In 1975, he and Peter Habeler made the first ascent of an 8,000-metre mountain without oxygen. Then, in 1978, they reached the top of Everest together — the first humans to do so without supplementary air. Messner later climbed Everest solo in 1980, again without oxygen.

But his life had dark moments too. In 1970, during an expedition on Nanga Parbat, a tragedy happened. While they were descending the mountain, Günther disappeared in an avalanche. Reinhold survived, but he lost several toes to frostbite. The loss of his brother affected him deeply, yet his indomitable spirit kept him going.

Messner used to say that mountains teach humility and strength. He completed his fourteen 8,000-metre peaks in 1986, always in his minimalist style. He also crossed Antarctica and Greenland on foot. Today, he lives quietly, but his adventures inspire climbers everywhere.

In his youth, Reinhold would spend every free moment on the rocks. He didn't use to dream of fame — he just wanted to climb higher. His life shows that with courage and determination, even the impossible becomes possible.

## **Questions:**

Question 1: Where and when was Reinhold Messner born, and what interesting fact is mentioned about the area?

Question 2: What did Messner and his brothers do regularly when he was a child?

Question 3: How did Messner differ from most other climbers in the 1970s regarding equipment and oxygen?

Question 4: What tragic event happened during the 1970 expedition on Nanga Parbat?

Question 5: What major achievements did Messner complete by 1986, and what else did he do apart from climbing high mountains?

## **Answers:**

Answer 1: Reinhold Messner was born in 1944 in a small village near Bolzano, Italy. The area used to belong to the Austrian Empire and is still German-speaking.

Answer 2: When he was a child, his father would take him and his brothers climbing in the rugged Dolomite Mountains every weekend. By thirteen, he would attempt difficult rock faces with his brother Günther.

Answer 3: Messner would climb with only light equipment, no outside support, and no supplementary (extra) oxygen — at a time when most climbers used heavy gear, large teams, and bottled oxygen, and people thought climbing the highest peaks without oxygen was impossible.

Answer 4: During the 1970 expedition on Nanga Parbat, while they were descending the mountain, his brother Günther disappeared in an avalanche. Reinhold survived, but he lost several toes to frostbite.

Answer 5: By 1986, Messner had completed climbing all fourteen peaks over 8,000 metres (the first person to do so, without supplementary oxygen). Apart from mountaineering, he also crossed Antarctica and Greenland on foot.

## 33 used to and would

Sir Ranulph Fiennes is an explorer. He **used to be** a soldier but started exploring in the 1960s. When he was younger, he **used to go** on very difficult expeditions and he **would take** risks that many other explorers wouldn't. In 2000, for example, he attempted to walk to the North Pole, alone and unsupported.



### 1 Form of used to

<b>POSITIVE</b>	<i>I used to work there. He used to be a soldier. We used to have a cat.</i>
<b>NEGATIVE</b>	<i>I did not (didn't) use to work.* He did not (didn't) use to be an explorer. They did not (didn't) use to have a cat.</i>
<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<i>Did you use to work? (Yes, I did.) Did they use to have a cat? (No, they didn't.) Where did he use to work?</i>

\* It is also possible to form the negative and question with *used to*: *didn't used to / did you used to?*

- ⚠ There is no present form of *used to*: *X I use to go to work by bus. ✓ I go to work by bus.*
- ⚠ Do not confuse *used to do* with *be/get used to doing*:  
*I'm used to spending time on my own.* (= I'm often alone; it isn't unusual for me.)  
*I used to spend time on my own.* (= I spent time on my own in the past; I don't any more.)

### 2 used to

We use *used to* + infinitive to talk about regular past actions that do not happen now:  
*I used to take the bus to work every day.* (But now I take the train.)  
*People used to write a lot of letters.* (But now they send emails.)

We often use adverbs of frequency (e.g. *always, once a week, every year*) with *used to*:  
*I always used to swim before breakfast. We often used to hold parties for our friends. We never used to stay up late when we were young!* (= We didn't use to stay up late.)

We also use *used to* + infinitive when we talk about past situations that are no longer true:  
*He used to be a soldier.* (But now he's an explorer.) *France used to have a king.*

#### 🔊 Pronunciation ▶ 1.13

### 3 would

We can also use *would* + infinitive to talk about regular past actions that do not happen now: *When we first moved here, people would stop and talk in the street. They don't now.*  
When we start descriptions of past actions with *used to*, we usually continue with *would*:  
*When he was younger, he used to go on very difficult expeditions and he would take risks ...*

- ⚠ *Would* is used for past actions, not situations:  
*X France would have a king. ✓ France used to have a king.*

#### 🔊 Pronunciation ▶ 1.14

### 4 used to or past simple?

We often use *used to*, not the past simple, when we want to emphasise a difference between the past and the present: *My sister works in an office now but she used to work on a farm.*

We use the past simple for

- single actions in the past: *X I used to have an exam last week. ✓ I had an exam last week.*
- periods of time: *X He used to be in Greece for two years. ✓ He was in Greece for two years.*
- a number of times: *X We used to swim in the pool twice when we stayed there. ✓ We swam in the pool twice when we stayed there.*

## Practice

1 Choose the correct words in *italics>. In two sentences, both answers are possible.*

- 0 When we lived in the country, people in shops *would / used to be* much friendlier.  
 1 When I was a child we *didn't use / weren't used to* fly – we couldn't afford it.  
 2 *Do / Did* you use to wear a uniform at your last school?  
 3 When Matt was in his twenties, he *used to / would* play rugby every Sunday.  
 4 Last week we *interviewed / used to interview* over twenty candidates.  
 5 *Did you use to / Would you* have dark hair when you were a girl?  
 6 In the nineteenth century people *worked / used to work* longer hours than they do now.

2 **GRAMMAR IN USE** Complete the text with the verbs in brackets. Use the past simple, *used to* or *would*. (Remember not to repeat *used to* too much.) **3.01** Listen and check.**The greatest mountain climber of all time?**

Reinhold Messner is often called 'the greatest mountain climber of all time'; he was the first person to climb all fourteen peaks of over 8,000 metres.

Messner was born near Bolzano, Italy, in 1944. This area (0) *used to belong* (belong) to the Austrian Empire, and is still German-speaking. When Reinhold was a child, he (1) ..... (go) climbing in the Dolomite Mountains with his father and brothers. He (2) ..... (become) a very good climber at a young age. He first (3) ..... (climb) the Himalayas in 1970, though this expedition was a tragedy because his brother (4) ..... (die) on the way down.

Messner was well-known for his attitude to the mountains: he (5) ..... (climb) with only light equipment, he (6) ..... (not request) any outside support and he (7) ..... (not take) any extra oxygen – at a time when it was thought impossible to climb the highest peaks without oxygen. Apart from mountaineering, Messner (8) ..... (make) a number of Arctic and Antarctic crossings.

3 Find six more mistakes and correct them. Tick (✓) the correct sentences. **3.02** Listen and check.

- 0 Messner didn't use to ~~taking~~ <sup>take</sup> extra oxygen when he climbed.  
 1 When we went to Nepal, I used to climb to Everest Base Camp once.  
 2 When we were children, we'd often visit our grandparents at the weekends.  
 3 People today use to spend a lot of time on their computers.  
 4 Did they use to have electric lighting in the 1800s?  
 5 Centuries ago people would be a lot shorter than today.  
 6 We never use to stay at school for lunch in those days.  
 7 Before the 1960s men wouldn't have long hair.  
 8 Were you used to learn French when you were at school?

## 4 Use the words in brackets to write about things that have changed in your life.

- 0 (holidays) *When I was young we would go to the mountains on holiday, but now I go abroad.*  
 1 (holidays) .....  
 2 (music) .....  
 3 (friends) .....

## Answers

### UNIT 33

- 1** 1 didn't use 2 Did 3 used to/would  
4 interviewed 5 Did you use to  
6 worked/used to work
- 2** 1 used to go/would go 2 became 3 climbed  
4 died 5 used to climb 6 wouldn't request  
7 wouldn't take 8 made
- 3** 1 I ~~used to climb~~ climbed  
2 ✓  
3 ~~use to spend~~ spend  
4 ✓  
5 ~~would~~ used to  
6 ~~use~~ used  
7 ~~wouldn't~~ didn't use to  
8 ~~Were you used~~ Did you use





## Answers

### UNIT 30

- 1** 1 became 2 gave 3 went 4 heard 5 met  
6 sold 7 took 8 travelled
- 2** 1 became 2 sold 3 heard 4 joined 5 did  
not/didn't go 6 went 7 explored 8 traded  
9 travelled 10 gave 11 didn't enjoy 12 died
- 3** 1 The slave trade stopped over 200 years ago.  
2 Who did you like most at your last school?  
3 We didn't understand the lecture last week.  
4 When did you take your last exam?  
5 When Jack arrived, he told us the news.  
6 Why did you start learning English?
- 4 Model answers**
- 1 *The last major festival in my country was last summer.*  
2 *I liked the history teacher most at my last school.*  
3 *I took my last exam just over a year ago.*  
4 *I started learning English because I had to study it at school.*