

Had better It's time...

A

Had better (I'd better / you'd better etc.)

I'd better do something = it is advisable to do it. If I don't, there will be a problem or a danger:

- I have to meet Ann in ten minutes. I'd better go now or I'll be late.
- 'Shall I take an umbrella?' 'Yes, you'd better. It might rain.'
- We'd better stop for petrol soon. The tank is almost empty.

The negative is I'd better not (= I had better not):

- A: Are you going out tonight?
- B: I'd better not. I've got a lot of work to do.
- You don't look very well. You'd better not go to work today.

You can use had better when you warn somebody that they must do something:

- You'd better be on time. / You'd better not be late. (or I'll be very angry)

Note that:

The form is 'had better' (usually 'I'd better / you'd better' etc. in spoken English):

- I'd better phone Carol, hadn't I?

Had is a past form, but in this expression the meaning is present or future, *not* past:

- I'd better go to the bank now/tomorrow.

We say 'I'd better do...' (*not* 'to do'):

- It might rain. We'd better take an umbrella. (*not* 'we'd better to take')

B

Had better and should

Had better is similar to should (see Unit 33A) but not exactly the same.

We use had better only for a particular situation (not for things in general).

You can use should in all types of situation to give an opinion or to give advice:

- It's cold today. You'd better wear a coat when you go out. (a particular situation)
- I think all drivers should wear seat belts. (in general – *not* 'had better wear')

Also, with had better, there is always a danger or a problem if you don't follow the advice.

Should only means 'it is a good thing to do'. Compare:

- It's a great film. You should go and see it. (but no danger, no problem if you don't)
- The film starts at 8.30. You'd better go now or you'll be late.

C

It's time...

You can say 'It's time (for somebody) to do something':

- It's time to go home. / It's time for us to go home.

You can also say:

- It's late. It's time we went home.

Here we use the past (went) but the meaning is present or future, *not* past:

- It's 10 o'clock and he's still in bed. It's time he got up. (*not* 'It's time he gets up')

It's time you did something = 'you should have done it already or started it'. We often use this structure to criticise or to complain:

- It's time the children were in bed. It's long after their bedtime.
- The windows are very dirty. I think it's time we cleaned them.

You can also say: It's about time... / It's high time... This makes the criticism stronger:

- Jack is a great talker. But it's about time he did something instead of just talking.
- You're very selfish. It's high time you realised that you're not the most important person in the world.

EXERCISES

35.1 Complete the sentences. Sometimes you need only one word, sometimes two.

- a I need some money. I'd better ...go... to the bank.

b John is expecting you to phone him. You better do it now.

c 'Shall I leave the window open?' 'No, you'd better it.'

d We'd better leave as soon as possible, we?
- a It's time the government something about the problem.

b It's time something about the problem.

c I think it's about time you about me instead of only thinking about yourself.

35.2 Read the situations and write sentences with had better. Use the words in brackets.

- You're going out for a walk with Tom. It might rain. You say to Tom: (an umbrella) ...We'd better take an umbrella...
- Jack has just cut himself. It's quite a bad cut. You say to him: (a plaster)
- You and Ann plan to go to a restaurant this evening. It's a very popular restaurant. You say to Ann: (reserve) We
- Jill doesn't look very well – not well enough to go to work. You say to her: (work)
- You received your phone bill four weeks ago but you haven't paid it yet. If you don't pay very soon, you could be in trouble. You say to yourself: (pay)
- You want to go out but you're expecting an important phone call. You say to your friend: (go out) I
- You and Fiona are going to the theatre. You've missed the bus and you don't want to be late. You say to Fiona: (a taxi)

35.3 Put in had better or should. Sometimes either is possible.

- I have an appointment in ten minutes. I'd better... go now or I'll be late.
- It's a great film. You ...should... go and see it. You'll really like it.
- I get up early tomorrow. I've got a lot to do.
- When people are driving, they keep their eyes on the road.
- Thank you for coming to see us. You come more often.
- She'll be upset if we don't invite her to the wedding, so we invite her.
- These biscuits are delicious. You try one.
- I think everybody learn a foreign language.

35.4 Read the situations and write sentences with It's time (somebody did something).

- You think the children should be in bed. It's already 11 o'clock. ...It's time the children were in bed...
- You haven't had a holiday for a very long time. You need one now. It's time I
- You're waiting for Mary. She is late. Why isn't she here yet? It's time she
- You're sitting on a train waiting for it to leave the station. It's already five minutes late.
- You enjoy having parties. You haven't had one for a long time.
- The company you work for is badly run. You think there should be some changes.

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.
but	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 travelling by train.
- but
- I prefer to drive rather than travel by train.
 - Ann prefers to live in the country 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'):

- 'Shall we go by train?' 'Well, I'd prefer to go by car.' (not 'I'd prefer going')
- I'd prefer to stay at home tonight rather than go to the cinema.

C

Would rather (I'd rather...)

Would rather (do) = would prefer (to do). After would rather we use the infinitive *without to*.

Compare:

- 'Shall we go by train?' { 'I'd prefer to go by car.'
'I'd rather go by car.' (not 'to go')
- '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 this evening, if you don't mind.
- 'Do you want to go out this evening?' 'I'd rather not.'

Study the structure after would rather:

I'd rather do something than (do) something else.

- I'd rather stay at home tonight than go to the cinema.

D

I'd rather you did something

When you want somebody to do something, you can say 'I'd rather you did something':

- 'Shall I stay here?' 'I'd rather you came with us.'
- 'Shall I tell them the news?' 'No. I'd rather they didn't know.'
- Shall I tell them or would you rather they didn't know?

In this structure we use the *past* (came, did etc.), but the meaning is present or future, *not past*.

Compare:

- I'd rather cook the dinner now.
- but
- I'd rather you cooked the dinner now. (not 'I'd rather you cook')

The negative is 'I'd rather you didn't...':

- I'd rather you didn't tell anyone what I said.
- 'Do you mind if I smoke?' 'I'd rather you didn't.'

EXERCISES

58.1 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 travelling by train.
- (tennis / football) I prefer
- (phone people / write letters) I to
- (go to the cinema / watch films on TV)

Now rewrite sentences 3 and 4 using the structure 'I prefer (to do something)...':

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

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

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

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

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

- (get a taxi / walk home) I'd prefer to get a taxi rather than walk home.
- (go for a swim / play tennis) I'd rather
- (wait a few minutes / leave now) I'd rather
- (eat at home / go to a restaurant) I'd prefer
- (think about it for a while / decide now) I'd rather

58.3 Complete the sentences using *would you rather I...*

- Are you going to cook the dinner or would you rather I cooked 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 ..?

58.4 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences.

- 'Shall 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 this evening or would you rather at home?
- This is a private letter addressed to me. I'd rather you read it.
- It's quite a nice house but I'd rather it a bit bigger.
- 'Do you mind if I turn on the radio?' 'I'd rather you I'm trying to study.'