

Would rather

We use *would rather* or *'d rather* to talk about preferring one thing to another. *Would rather* has two different constructions. (The subjects are underlined in the examples.)

Compare

same subject (+ base form)

different subject (+ past simple clause)

I'd rather stay at home than go out tonight.

I'd rather you stayed at home tonight.

I'd rather not go out tonight.

I'd rather you didn't go out tonight

In negative sentences with a different subject, the negative comes on the clause that follows, not on *would rather*:

She'd rather you didn't phone after 10 o'clock.

Not: ~~She wouldn't rather you phoned after 10 o'clock.~~

Same subject

When the subject is the same person in both clauses, we use *would rather (not)* followed by the base form of the verb:

We'd rather go on Monday.

Not: ~~We'd rather to go ... or We'd rather going ...~~

More than half the people questioned would rather have a shorter summer break and more holidays at other times.

I'd rather not fly. I hate planes.

When we want to refer to the past we use *would rather + have + -ed* form (perfect infinitive without *to*):

She would rather have spent the money on a holiday. (The money wasn't spent on a holiday.)

I'd rather have seen it at the cinema than on DVD. (I saw the film on DVD.)

Different subjects

When the subjects of the two clauses are different, we often use the past simple to talk about the present or future, and the past perfect to talk about the past:

I would rather they did something about it instead of just talking about it. (past simple to talk about the present or future)

Would you rather I wasn't honest with you? (past simple to talk about the present or future)

Not: ~~Would you rather I'm not honest with you? or ... I won't be honest with you?~~

I'd rather you hadn't rung me at work. (past perfect to talk about the past)

Much rather

We can use *much* with *would rather* to make the preference stronger. In speaking, we stress *much*:

*I'd **much rather** make a phone call than send an email.*

*She'd **much rather** they didn't know about what had happened.*

Short responses: *I'd rather not*

We often use *I'd rather not* as a short response to say *no* to a suggestion or request:

A:

Do you want to go for a coffee?

B:

*I'd **rather not**, if you don't mind.*

Would sooner, would just as soon

We use the phrases *would sooner* and *would just as soon* when we say that we prefer one thing to another thing. They mean approximately the same as *would rather*:

*I don't really want to go back to France again this year. I'd **sooner** go to Spain.*

*Thanks for the invitation, but, if you don't mind, we'd **just as soon** stay at home and watch it all on TV.*

Would sooner is more common than *would just as soon*. However, *would rather* is more common than both of these phrases.

See also:

- [Would rather](#)

Would rather, would sooner: typical errors

- We don't use *would rather* or *would sooner* with an *-ing* form or a *to*-infinitive:

*I don't need a lift, thanks. I'd **rather** walk.*

Not: ~~I'd rather to walk.~~ or ~~I'd rather walking.~~

- When we use *not* referring to a different subject, we attach *not* to the second clause, not to *would rather* or *would sooner*:

*I'd rather they **didn't** tell anyone*

Not: ~~I'd rather not they told anyone.~~

See also:

- [Rather](#)

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