



## Preference (would rather/had better): Would Rather with Subjunctive: Preferences About Other People's Actions Exercises

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

- I'd rather you \_\_\_\_ tomorrow instead of today.  
a) came  
b) come  
c) coming  
d) will come
- She'd rather her children \_\_\_\_ so much time playing video games.  
a) don't spend  
b) didn't spend  
c) not spend  
d) won't spend
- I'd rather you \_\_\_\_ me the whole truth about what happened.  
a) tell  
b) telling  
c) told  
d) will tell
- We'd rather the meeting \_\_\_\_ in the morning, not the afternoon.  
a) is  
b) will be  
c) being  
d) was
- My parents would rather I \_\_\_\_ medicine at university.  
a) studied  
b) study  
c) studying  
d) will study
- He'd rather we \_\_\_\_ him before visiting.  
a) call  
b) called  
c) calling  
d) will call
- I'd rather you \_\_\_\_ that. It was supposed to be a surprise.  
a) didn't say  
b) don't say  
c) hadn't said  
d) haven't said
- She'd rather he \_\_\_\_ her to the party last weekend.  
a) invites  
b) invited  
c) would invite  
d) had invited
- I'd rather you \_\_\_\_ the window. Now the room is freezing.  
a) hadn't opened  
b) didn't open  
c) don't open  
d) haven't opened
- We'd rather they \_\_\_\_ us about the change of plans earlier.  
a) tell  
b) had told  
c) told  
d) have told

11. I'd prefer you \_\_\_\_ here on time tomorrow.  
a) are  
b) being  
c) to be  
d) be
12. She'd prefer her son \_\_\_\_ a safer career.  
a) chose  
b) choosing  
c) choose  
d) to choose
13. I'd prefer the children \_\_\_\_ outside after dark.  
a) not to play  
b) don't play  
c) not playing  
d) didn't play
14. The manager would prefer everyone \_\_\_\_ the report before Friday.  
a) finishing  
b) to finish  
c) finish  
d) finished
15. I'd rather \_\_\_\_ at home than go to the party tonight.  
a) to stay  
b) staying  
c) stay  
d) stayed
16. I'd rather you \_\_\_\_ this email to anyone. It's confidential.  
a) don't show  
b) not show  
c) won't show  
d) didn't show
17. My boss would prefer me \_\_\_\_ overtime this weekend.  
a) work  
b) working  
c) to work  
d) worked
18. A: Shall I pay by card? B: I'd rather you \_\_\_\_ in cash, if possible.  
a) pay  
b) to pay  
c) paying  
d) paid
19. I'd rather you \_\_\_\_ me about the problem earlier. Now it's too late to fix.  
a) had told  
b) told  
c) tell  
d) would tell
20. She'd prefer \_\_\_\_ at a small company rather than a big corporation.  
a) work  
b) to work  
c) working  
d) worked



## Answers

1. a) came
2. b) didn't spend
3. c) told
4. d) was
5. a) studied
6. b) called
7. c) hadn't said
8. d) had invited
9. a) hadn't opened
10. b) had told
11. c) to be
12. d) to choose
13. a) not to play
14. b) to finish
15. c) stay
16. d) didn't show
17. c) to work
18. d) paid
19. a) had told
20. b) to work



# Explanations

## 1. “came” (a)

After 'would rather + subject', use the past simple to talk about present or future preferences. 'I'd rather you came tomorrow' means 'I want you to come tomorrow, not today.' The past tense 'came' here is subjunctive — it does not refer to the past.

## 2. “didn't spend” (b)

The negative form of 'would rather + subject + past simple' uses 'didn't'. 'She'd rather her children didn't spend so much time' expresses her preference about their current behaviour. Don't use 'don't' or 'won't' — the subjunctive requires past tense forms.

## 3. “told” (c)

After 'would rather + you', use the past simple (subjunctive). 'I'd rather you told me the truth' means 'I want you to tell me the truth.' Despite using the past form 'told', this refers to a present or future situation.

## 4. “was” (d)

After 'would rather + subject', use the past simple. 'We'd rather the meeting was in the morning' expresses a preference about a future arrangement. In formal English, 'were' is also acceptable here (subjunctive 'were'), but 'was' is standard in everyday English.

## 5. “studied” (a)

After 'would rather + I', use the past simple (subjunctive). 'My parents would rather I studied medicine' means they prefer me to study medicine. The past tense 'studied' does not refer to the past here — it expresses a present wish about someone else's actions.

## 6. “called” (b)

After 'would rather + we', use the past simple (subjunctive). 'He'd rather we called him before visiting' means he prefers us to call in advance. The past form 'called' expresses a preference about future behaviour.

## 7. “hadn't said” (c)

Use 'would rather + subject + past perfect' to express regret about something that has already happened. The surprise was ruined because the person already said it. 'Hadn't said' shows the speaker wishes the past action hadn't occurred. Compare: 'I'd rather you didn't say that' (about present/future) vs 'I'd rather you hadn't said that' (about the past).

## 8. “had invited” (d)

Use 'would rather + subject + past perfect' for wishes about past events. 'She'd rather he had invited her' means she wishes he had invited her (but he didn't). 'Last weekend' confirms this is about the past, requiring the past perfect. Simple past 'invited' would be for present/future wishes.

## 9. “hadn't opened” (a)

Use 'would rather + you + past perfect' to express regret about a completed action. The window has already been opened and the room is cold. 'Hadn't opened' shows the speaker wishes this past action had not happened. 'Didn't open' would express a preference about future behaviour.

## 10. “had told” (b)

Use 'would rather + they + past perfect' for wishes about past situations. 'We'd rather they had told us earlier' means we wish they had informed us sooner (but they didn't). The word 'earlier' and the context suggest this is about a past event that has already happened.

### 11. “to be” (c)

Use 'would prefer + object + to-infinitive' to express a preference about someone else's actions. 'I'd prefer you to be here on time' is correct. This is an alternative to the subjunctive: 'I'd rather you were here on time' (past simple). Both structures express the same meaning.

### 12. “to choose” (d)

Use 'would prefer + object + to-infinitive'. 'She'd prefer her son to choose a safer career.' Compare with the subjunctive alternative: 'She'd rather her son chose a safer career' (past simple after 'would rather').

### 13. “not to play” (a)

The negative of 'would prefer + object + to-infinitive' is 'would prefer + object + not + to-infinitive'. 'I'd prefer the children not to play outside' is correct. With 'would rather', you'd use the past simple: 'I'd rather the children didn't play outside.'

### 14. “to finish” (b)

Use 'would prefer + object + to-infinitive'. 'The manager would prefer everyone to finish the report before Friday.' This is a formal way to express a preference about other people's actions.

### 15. “stay” (c)

This is the basic 'would rather + bare infinitive' structure (not the subjunctive). 'I'd rather stay at home' — no extra subject after 'would rather', so use the bare infinitive. The subjunctive past tense ('stayed') is only used when there is a different subject (e.g., 'I'd rather you stayed').

### 16. “didn't show” (d)

The negative subjunctive after 'would rather + subject' uses 'didn't + bare infinitive'. 'I'd rather you didn't show this email' means 'please don't show this email'. Despite using past tense, this refers to a present/future request.

### 17. “to work” (c)

Use 'would prefer + object pronoun + to-infinitive'. 'My boss would prefer me to work overtime.' The object pronoun 'me' is followed by 'to work'. Compare: 'My boss would rather I worked overtime' (subjunctive with past simple).

### 18. “paid” (d)

After 'would rather + you', use the past simple (subjunctive). 'I'd rather you paid in cash' expresses a preference about the other person's action. Despite referring to a future payment, the past form 'paid' is required. This is one of the most common uses of the subjunctive with 'would rather'.

### 19. “had told” (a)

Use 'would rather + you + past perfect' to express regret about a past situation. The speaker wishes they had been informed earlier, but the problem can no longer be fixed. 'Had told' refers to an unrealized past action. 'Told' (simple past) would mean a preference about the present or future.

### 20. “to work” (b)

Use 'would prefer + to-infinitive + rather than' to express a preference. 'She'd prefer to work at a small company rather than a big corporation.' After 'would prefer', always use the to-infinitive.