

Indirect speech

Would is the past tense of will in indirect speech.

Direct speech: John said, 'I will wait until you return.'

Indirect speech: John said that he would wait until I return.

Direct speech: The boy said, 'I will not eat this cake.'

Indirect speech: The boy said that he would not eat that cake.

Willingness and determination

Would expresses ideas such as willingness or determination.

He said that he would help me.

She said that she would wait for me.

I would have my own way. (= I am determined to have my own way.)

Habitual action in the past

Would can be used to talk about a habitual or customary action in the past.

After dinner we would all sit in the hall and chat for a while.

Would and would like to

Would is often used to express a wish. In this case it means the same as would like to.

I would know what I am supposed to do.

I would like to know what I am supposed to do.

Polite questions

Would is used to ask polite questions.

Would you like a cup of coffee? (More polite than 'Will you like a cup of coffee?')

Would you mind lending me your bicycle?

Would you, please, call me a taxi?

Would is also used in the main clause when preceded or followed by a subordinate clause expressing an impossible or improbable condition.

If I could fly like a bird, I would be with you now.

If I were the President, I would lower taxes.