Grammar worksheet + exercise: would rather, would prefer, prefer

Specific preferences: would prefer, would rather

When we speak about a specific preference (our preference now), would rather and would prefer have the same meaning and are interchangeable.

Would rather can be abbreviated to 'd rather.
Would prefer can be abbreviated to 'd prefer:

- We went to the theatre yesterday; today I would rather go to the cinema.
- We went to the theatre yesterday; today I would prefer to go to the cinema.
- . . . I'd rather go to the cinema.
- . . . I'd prefer to go to the cinema.

Would rather is followed by the infinitive without to.
Would prefer is followed by to + infinitive or a noun:

- I'd rather have fruit juice.
- I'd prefer to have fruit juice.
- I'd prefer fruit juice. (noun, no verb)

We say would rather . . . than.
We say would prefer . . . rather than or would prefer . . . instead of:

- It's such nice weather – I'd rather sit in the garden than watch TV.
- It's such nice weather – I'd prefer to sit in the garden rather than watch TV.
- It's such nice weather – I'd prefer to sit in the garden instead of watching TV.

We use a past tense after would rather when we speak about the actions of other people, even though that action may be in the present or future:

- I'd rather you took a taxi (instead of walking) – it's not safe on the streets at night.
- The film is quite violent. I'd rather our children didn't watch it.
General preferences: *prefer, would rather*

When we talk about general preferences, we can use *prefer* or *would rather* (but not *would prefer*). *Prefer* and *would rather* have the same meaning:

- *I prefer* walking to cycling.
- *I would rather* walk than cycle.

After *prefer* we use the verb in the -ing form. After *would rather* we use the infinitive without *to*:

- *I prefer* using a keyboard to writing with a pen.
- *I’d rather use* a keyboard than write with a pen. (I’d = I would)

We say *prefer . . . to*, but *would rather . . . than*:

- *I prefer* walking to driving.
- *I’d rather* walk than drive.
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Exercise instructions

Choose the best answer to fill the gap in each of the following:

1. I prefer coffee ________ tea.
   - a. to    b. than    c. from

2. I don't fancy the theatre again. I'd rather ________ to the cinema.
   - a. to    b. go    c. going

3. Although I love relaxing on beaches, I think I prefer ________ in the mountains.
   - a. walk    b. walking

4. I'd rather speak to him in person ________ things over the phone.
   - a. than discuss    b. to discussing    c. to discuss

5. I prefer trains ________ cars.
   - a. from    b. than    c. to

6. I'm not a big fan of cars; I prefer ________ by train.
   - a. travelling    b. travel

7. If I had a choice I think I'd rather _____________ London.
   - a. live in Paris than in    b. live in Paris to    c. to live in Paris than

8. They'd rather have lunch inside, but I'd prefer _____________ outside in the garden.
   - a. eat    b. eating    c. to eat
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Key

1. I prefer coffee to tea. (a.)
2. I don't fancy the theatre again. I'd rather go to the cinema. (b.)
3. Although I love relaxing on beaches, I think I prefer walking in the mountains. (b.)
4. I'd rather speak to him in person than discuss things over the phone. (a.)
5. I prefer trains to cars. (c.)
6. I'm not a big fan of cars; I prefer travelling by train. (a.)
7. If I had a choice I think I'd rather live in Paris than in London. (a.)
8. They'd rather have lunch inside, but I'd prefer to eat outside in the garden. (c.)

Online version of this exercise: https://goo.gl/bsNdDT

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