



Video 3 – Real Grammar: would or should?

“Is it better to use *would* or *should* when the subject is “I” or “We”?”

Let’s investigate.

Your favourite band is giving a concert next month and you’re keen to see them play.

Do you say *I would like to go to the concert*

or

I should like to go to the concert

According to traditional grammar, you use *shall* and *should* in first-person constructions but *will* and *would* when the subject is in the second or third person. So we’re supposed to say things like

“I should not have known about it if you hadn’t told me” and “We shall see her tomorrow”

(But in the second and third person it’s “you or she or they **will** see her tomorrow”.)

But the evidence in our corpus shows that very few people still observe this rule. In fact, the expression “I would like...” is over 50 times more frequent than “I should like...”.

Our conclusion is that *both* sentences are correct, but it’s much more natural to say *I would like to go* - while *I **should** like to go* sounds rather old-fashioned.

If you *would* like to know more about this topic or other real grammar questions, look at the Macmillan Dictionary Blog.