

Lesson:

WISH / IF ONLY

1) I wish + simple past

We use this structure to express regrets, and wishes for unlikely or impossible things. You want to change a present state. We are not talking about willingness, unwillingness, insistence or refusal (when would would be used). We can replace *wish* with *if only*, to make the sentence more emphatic.

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| e.g. | I wish (that) I were/was taller. (<i>were</i> is more formal, but still commonly used) |
| | If only I was/were taller. |
| | I wish (that) I spoke Portuguese well. |
| | Jack wishes (that) I didn't smoke. |
| | I wish I lived in Italy. |
| | If only you didn't have to leave now. |

2) I wish + would + infinitive

We use this structure when we want something to happen or when we want somebody to do or not to do something. We are not happy with the current situation, so it often expresses dissatisfaction or annoyance. It can be like an order or a critical request. We can replace *wish* with *if only*, to make the sentence more emphatic.

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| e.g. | I wish he would stop complaining. |
| | If only you wouldn't drive so fast. |

If the verb is an event verb (e.g. become, get, come, leave hit), then the sentence is referring to the future. In this case, we can use either *would* or *could*.

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| e.g. | I wish I could go with you to the barbecue at the weekend. |
| | If only you would leave. |

However, if you have wishes about simple future events, you need to use *hope*.

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| e.g. | I hope we don't get snow tomorrow. |
| | I hope he'll talk to me at the party this evening. |

3) I wish + had + past participle

We use this structure as a conditional to mean you wish something had happened, and you are sorry that it didn't happen. You are expressing a regret about the past.

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| e.g. | I feel terribly guilty. I wish I hadn't told Sam Tom's secret. |
| | I had a great holiday, but If only the weather had been better. |
| | I feel ill. I wish I hadn't come into work today. |