Unreal Uses of Past Tenses

In English Past Tenses do not always refer to a situation in the past. They can be used to refer to unreal situations in the present or future. Let's have a closer look at this.

CASE 1 - IT'S TIME YOU DID SOMETHING

It's time Jack **went** on a diet



! You could also *use It's high time/ It's about time* to make the meaning more emphatic

- It's past midnight. It's time you went to bed.
- It's about time the government reduced taxes.

CASE 2 - I'D RATHER YOU DID SOMETHING

I'd rather Mum **cooked** the meals



! You should use *would rather + bare infinitive* when there is no change of the subject, e.g. *I'd rather not talk about this!*

- The roads are icy. I'd rather you did not drive now.
- Would you rather we invited our neighbors for dinner?

CASE 3 - I WISH / IF ONLY

I wish my teacher **were not** so strict.



! With *wish*, you can use *I wish I were/ I wish he were* instead *of I wish I was/ I wish he was;*

- I wish I had his mobile phone number. I'd call him.
- I wish he were not such a boring person.

CASE 4 - UNREAL CONDITIONS - 2nd CONDITIONAL

If I lived in the Medieval Ages, I would be a knight.



! Note that the main clause can contain *'would' 'could' or 'might.*

- If I were you, I wouldn't go out with that girl.
- If I had free time, I would learn Spanish.

Fill in the blanks with the correct verb form

1. Your job does not pay very well.
It's time you _____ (get) a better job.

2. - We can talk about it in the morning.
- I'd rather we _____ (discuss) this evening.

3. I have to drive 50 miles to see my girlfriend.
I wish she _____ (live) nearer.

4. The news are shocking.
I'd rather mum _____ (not know) about it!

5. I'm fed up with the cold weather.
If only I _____ (can) go on holiday in Egypt!

6. Would you rather we _____ (carry on) with the report tomorrow?

7. It's high time Josh _____ (get married). He is in his late forties now.

8. If only I _____ (can speak) perfect English. I would not be sitting in this class!

9. If I _____ (win) a million dollars, I would buy a car, probably a Ferrari.

10. I wish Tom _____ (not be) so lazy. He spends his time sleeping and eating instead of studying.

11. I am too tired to cook dinner this evening. I would rather we _____ (eat) in a restaurant for a change.

12. If you _____ (not be) so sensitive, you would not suffer so much!