

## 8.2 Unreal past and regrets – *wish, if only, it's time and would rather*

### Present and future

- To express regret about a present situation which seems to be impossible to change, we use **wish/if only + subject + Past Simple**:

*I wish I knew more about ecology.*

*I wish oceans weren't used as rubbish tips.*

*If only we could save sea animals from starvation.*

*If only I didn't have to work so much.*

- To say that we believe somebody should do something in the present or in the near future, we use **it's (high) time + subject + Past Simple**:

*It's high time people stopped driving cars in cities.*

*It's high time you started recycling your rubbish.*

- To talk what we would prefer somebody to do in the present or in the future, we use **would rather + subject + Past Simple**:

*I'd rather we switched to organic fruit and vegetables.*

*My mum would rather I studied more.*

### Past

- To express regret about a past situation, we use **wish/if only + subject + Past Perfect**:

*I wish we had done more to prevent this tragedy.*

*My sister wishes we hadn't moved to this area, but I'm happy about it.*

*If only the city council hadn't reduced the funds for environmental protection.*

*If only I had listened to you when you advised me not to go on that expedition!*

### 1 Choose the correct option.

- If only I *lost / hadn't lost / didn't lose* my camera on the beach.
- It's high time we *stop / stopped / had stopped* dumping waste in the seas.
- My back's all red. I wish I *had / did / would* put more sun cream on.
- I'd rather she *couldn't / didn't / won't* go alone, to be honest.
- If only I *hadn't to / had to / didn't have to* go camping. I hate sleeping in tents.
- I wish you all *knew / had known / know* just how much effort I put into this trip.
- If only I *had seen / saw / did see* her earlier. I'd have asked her to join us.
- I'd rather we *use / used / had used* less plastic than we currently do.
- If only the fire *doesn't destroy / didn't destroy / hadn't destroyed* the forest.
- I wish I *could / did / will* do more to protect endangered species.

### 2 Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

- If only more people \_\_\_\_\_ (leave) a patch of their garden to grow wild, it would help wildlife.
- So many products damage the environment. It's time consumers \_\_\_\_\_ (take) more interest in how the things they buy are made.
- It's difficult to know what products contain. I'd rather companies \_\_\_\_\_ (label) them more clearly.
- Some species are now at risk of extinction. I wish we \_\_\_\_\_ (do) more to protect them earlier.
- I wish supermarkets \_\_\_\_\_ (not/sell) fruit and vegetables wrapped in plastic.
- The new road blocks a migration route for animals. If only they \_\_\_\_\_ (consult) wildlife experts, it could have been avoided.
- We all contribute to pollution. It's high time we \_\_\_\_\_ (recognise) that fact.
- The heat is terrible! If only it \_\_\_\_\_ (not/be) so hot today!
- It sounds like the lecture you attended was fascinating. I wish I \_\_\_\_\_ (know) about it.
- I'd rather we \_\_\_\_\_ (not/discuss) the issue right now if you don't mind.

### 3 Complete the text with the correct form of the verbs in the box.

(do know not assume not fly switch warn)

I love travelling, but lately I've become more conscious of my environmental footprint. When I look back on the amazing places I've visited, I have fond memories, but I also wish I <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ quite so many air miles. It's time more of us <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to less polluting forms of transport. I've been trying to cut my air travel, but it's not always that easy. I wish big travel companies <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ that everyone wants to fly. Of course, they don't offer other transport options, because they'd rather everyone <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ the same to keep things simple. Researching different routes yourself can be fun, but it doesn't always work out. When I planned to take a ferry from Spain to Morocco last year, for example, I wish I <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ that it sometimes gets cancelled in bad weather. I got stuck in Cádiz for two days and missed the train I'd booked from Tangier to Marrakesh. If only someone <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ me about possible delays, I'd have waited to buy my train ticket when I arrived.