



## Talking About Regrets

You can easily replace an "IF ONLY" sentence with an "I WISH" sentence to talk about present or past regrets.

Note that when you express regrets, the "ideal scenario" or "imaginary situation" is always different from "reality"

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"Mary can't speak Chinese! If only she could speak Chinese!"

Look at the examples below:

### Present Regrets:

Example: I don't have a dress and now I can't go to the party.

a) If only I had a dress now!

b) I wish I had a dress now!

Note that when you talk about **present regrets**, you use **the past form of the verb**!

### Past Regrets:

Example: I forgot my mom's birthday. I made her feel sad.

a) If only I hadn't forgotten her birthday!

b) I wish I hadn't forgotten her birthday!

Note that when you talk about **past regrets**, you use **a perfect form of the verb**!\*

\*The perfect form of the verb is a combination of **HAD** + the **past participle** of the principal verb.

You can also use **SHOULD + HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE** of the principal verb to talk about **PAST REGRETS**.

Example: I made a terrible mistake on my test! I got a very bad grade!

a) If only I hadn't made that terrible mistake!

b) I wish I hadn't made that terrible mistake!

c) I shouldn't have made that terrible mistake!

A quick reminder: it is important to know the simple past and past participle forms of the most common verbs. For a list of such verbs, go to <https://www.eslbuzz.com/english-verb-forms-regular-and-irregular-verbs/>



**EXERCISE ON EXPRESSING REGRETS:**

**Now try to use the previous information to make sentences expressing regrets. Use the suggested structures in parentheses.**

—————→ **Attention : sentences may refer to past or present situations!**

**Example: I didn't drive carefully last night. ( I wish ... )**

—————→ **I wish I had driven carefully last night!**

a) I don't have a car . ( If only... )

*If only* \_\_\_\_\_.

b) I didn't pay attention when the teacher explained the lesson. ( I should have ... )

*I should have* \_\_\_\_\_.

c) Mary doesn't like me! ( I wish ... )

*I wish Mary* \_\_\_\_\_.

d) I don't speak Italian. ( If only... )

*If only* \_\_\_\_\_.

e) I disappointed my best friend ( I should have ... )

*I should* \_\_\_\_ *have* \_\_\_\_\_.

f) I'm not good-looking. ( I wish )

\_\_\_\_\_.

g) I stayed late at work and missed the bus. ( I should have ... )

\_\_\_\_\_.

h) I'm sorry I don't know how to use the computer. ( If only... )

\_\_\_\_\_.

i) Jimmy likes playing baseball very much. ( He wishes... )

*He wishes he* \_\_\_\_\_ *professional baseball.*

j) Laura's house is very small. ( If only she ... )

*If only she* \_\_\_\_\_ *a bigger house!*